

ERRATA.

P. 17. l. 3. *instead of [.] make it [i]* P. 40. l. 3.
for lost read left. P. 43. l. 23. *read deepest.* P. 44.
l. 25. *after [,] add [()* P. 62. l. 13. *read such.* P.
64. l. 1. *read Whoever.* l. 30. *read upon.* P. 115, l.
12. *after ill, add [;]*



LETTER

To a Gentleman Dissenting from the
CHURCH of *ENGLAND*;

CONCERNING

THE LIVES

OF

Churchmen and Dissenters.

5

WHEREIN

The *peculiar Obligations* which Dissenters are supposed to lie under to Holiness of Life, and the *special Advantages* they are pretended to enjoy above the Members of the Church of *England* for promoting that End, are considered, divers great Advantages which the Members of the Church do *really* enjoy above *them* are pointed out, the Lives of both fairly and impartially represented, the Argument (or Prejudice) arising from the better Lives (*real or supposed*) of Dissenters, in favour of their Churches, is discussed, and what Dr. WATTS has advanced upon those Subjects in his Book, entitled, *An humble Attempt towards the Revival of Practical Religion among Christians*, is largely examined.

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PREFACE

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 in my Opinion, we should have done
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 taken, if, for one who renounces the
 Communion of the Church of England,

~~15...959~~
 '73...4413

PREFACE.

THE Lives of Churchmen and Dissenters, which are the Subject of the ensuing Letter, have been but rarely, and then only occasionally, touched upon in those Controversial Writings, which from time to time have passed between them. The Dissenters not having, it seems, thought fit to insist much upon those Points in the *Argumentative*, but only in the *Invective* or *Declamatory* Way, the Writers on our Side did not seem to think they had any Occasion to consider them. But, in my Opinion, we should have done it of ourselves. For I am greatly mistaken, if, for one who renounces the

Communion of the Established Church upon any *Scruple* about conforming to the Constitution, the Rites, and Ceremonies thereof, there are not ten who do it merely in pursuance of a Notion they are possessed with of *better Edifying* and *better Living* in their Churches. And if so, the putting their People in a *right way of Thinking*, in regard to those two Points, would help more to weaken, and go farther towards putting an End to the unhappy Schism they are engaged in, than the completest and most unanswerable Vindication of the Constitution, and of all the Forms and Appointments of the Church. The former of these Notions has been often largely considered, and excellently well refuted, particularly in the *London Cases*. The latter I here undertake to consider; no body else, as I before intimated, at least so far as I know, having yet done it
to

P R E F A C E.

v

to any purpose. I have been rash enough to take the Occasion, which was given me, to animadvert upon one of their worthiest Ministers and ablest Writers; he having said more upon this Subject than I have met with elsewhere. I have considered the *special Obligations* which he supposes Dissenters under to greater Holiness of Life; and I have made appear, that the *peculiar Advantages*, which he also pretends *they* enjoy, above *the Members of the Church*, towards the same End, are none at all; but, on the contrary, that *we* have many Advantages of that Sort, which are wholly wanting in *their Churches*. I have offered divers Considerations upon the Lives of Churchmen and our Dissenting Brethren, as well Ministers as People; and have shewn, I hope, they have not so much on those Accounts, to boast of, as, I suppose, is commonly apprehended; and

and what they have is not owing to any peculiar Excellencies and superior Advantages, in their Way, towards nourishing Men up in Goodness, but to Circumstances and Causes of a quite different nature; and that, after all, Religion is to be tried only by the Doctrines and Practices thereof, and not by the Lives of its Professors.

I hope I may be allowed to take the Notice I have of this Gentleman, without offending either *him* or others. He himself observes, in the Book which I am now considering, p. 138. *It may not be improper in some Parts of their Ministrations to enter into the Merits of the Cause, and modestly to give their People the Reasons why they separate from the Public Worship of the Parish.* And then, doubtless, he will allow me modestly to shew that those are no Reasons; especially when this is done,
as

as I here declare it to be, with no more Intention to maintain a Controversy with *him*, than *he* professes to have to begin one with his Brethren of the Established Church; though I must say, too, when Things so highly, and, at the same time, so injuriously reflecting upon it are advanced, and published to the World, he could not, I think, reasonably expect to escape, and I admire he has hitherto escaped Animadversion from one or other.

A Design of the Nature set forth above, if it were well executed, would, I believe, be thought an essential Service to the Church of *England*. How it has been executed in the following Writing, the ingenuous Reader is to judge. But if it had not been thought that some *small* Service to Religion and the Church of God might be expected, or, however, *hoped for* from it,

it, I should have indulged my Reluctances, and given way to those Reasons which were rising continually in my Mind against making it public, and let it remain with me an *Anecdote* for ever.

A L E T.

A
L E T T E R
CONCERNING
T H E L I V E S
O F

Churchmen and Dissenters, &c.

S I R,

THE last time we were together, at the House of Mr. G——, our Neighbour and common Friend, in that delightful *Alcove* which commands one of the finest Prospects in the World, being the Anniversary of the Restoration of King *Charles* the Second and the Royal Family, the Conversation, as on such a Day was natural, turned, for a while, upon the *marvellous Footsteps* of divine Providence in that Revolution, and the *happy Effects* of it. In abatement of which, however, one of the Company took notice of that Deluge of Debauchery and Profaneness which *then* broke in upon us. And hereupon, as you doubtless remember, you was pleased to observe, “ that
“ the Corruption was not general, but one Part
“ of the Nation yet held to their former Strict-
“ nefs.” And you farther added, in Terms, however, as your way always is, very respectful to the
B Company;

2 *A Letter concerning the Lives of*

Company, who were hearty and serious Conformists to the Church of *England*, “ that there was
 “ *then*, and has been *ever since*, in the Lives of
 “ the two Parties of Churchmen and Dissenters, a
 “ Difference so visible, and so greatly to the advantage of the latter, as to be, to you, a mighty
 “ Confirmation in the way of Non-conformity you
 “ was in; since it *must*, and did apparently proceed
 “ from some special Advantages, towards growing
 “ in Grace and Goodness, *you* enjoyed above the
 “ Members of the Church. For you could not
 “ help thinking, *that* was the best Religion which
 “ had the most of those Advantages and did accordingly produce the best Fruits.” — And you took that occasion to recommend a Book written by your very ingenious Friend Dr. *Watts*, entitled, *An Attempt towards the Revival of Practical Religion among Christians*, wherein this Subject (you told us) is largely handled. — You had no sooner done, but I perceived the Eyes of the whole Company turn upon *me*; not, I suppose, as one whom they thought abler than themselves to say what was proper to be said, but as one whom it would not become, by reason of his Cloth, to be wanting, on such an occasion, to vindicate the Honour of, and do right to the Church of *England*. This drove me from my natural Taciturnity; and therefore addressing myself to you — I readily acknowledged, that a great Debauchery of *Manners* did come in with the *Restoration*, as a Debauchery of *Principles* came in with another *Revolution* that has since happened, which, nevertheless, we *then* gratefully received, and think on *now* with Pleasure. And if the *Debauchery of that Time* did not reach the Non-conformists, it was, perhaps, because the *Joy of that Time* did not reach them neither. The great and sudden Joy of the
 Royal

Royal Party, for their happy Deliverance from a long and grievous Oppression, made them almost mad, (as the Oppression itself, according to *Solomon's* Observation, had before made them, though in a different way) and pushed them on into many Extravagancies and sinful Follies. But *your* Joy, on that occasion, being so very *moderate*, we may cease to wonder, that it did not transport *you* into any Excesses, or do much injury to your Morals. This is all, as I remember, I thought necessary to say upon that Head. — But as to your being confirmed in your present way of Non-conformity by seeing the Difference of Life between Churchman and Dissenter, so much, you said, *to the Advantage of the latter*; I took *that* to be a Matter of *greater* Moment, and so thought it necessary to enter *deeper* into it; and did accordingly offer many things, to shew you how false and delusive, how groundless and unreasonable your Satisfaction was. Some of these, if I was not deceived, and that greatly too, stuck with you. And my observing *this* made me, afterwards, that I could not be easy within myself, without doing something more, to *lower*, and, if possible, to *take quite away*, that Satisfaction, which, I plainly saw, was so pernicious to you.

To say truth, I was, at first, not a little surprized, to find *You* in *such* a train of Thinking. I could not but admire, how a Gentleman, though not brought up in the Schools of Learning, yet so much improved by Conversation, and by *running to and fro* in the way of Commerce, whereby the Mind is enlarged, and *Knowledge is encreased*, and who, since his Retirement to that elegant Seat in the Country, and fine Estate about it, acquired by his Industry and prudent Management, has so much given himself up to Reading: I could not, I say,

4 *A Letter concerning the Lives of*

but wonder, how a Gentleman of *your* Capacity and Understanding could be misled by *such* an Argument into the By-ways of Separation. But when, after a little Reflection, I came to consider you in another light, as one who has a Zeal for God, and an ardent Desire to promote the Interests of Godliness and practical Religion, my wonder presently ceased; and I thought it natural *you* should think well of a Cause which may *seem* to have *some sort* of Connexion with those good Things. This, I plainly perceived, was your Prejudice, (for you must allow me to call it so) a laudable one indeed! if any Prejudice can be laudable, but such, however, as has a little blinded you, and led you already into some erroneous Ways, and, if you have not a care, may lead you into others that are yet more erroneous. It has blinded and misled Thousands before *you*. For, Sir, this is not *your own particular* Prejudice, but is *general and ancient*, and has been carefully *cultivated* among you from the very beginning of the Separation. — I have read somewhere, that in the Grand Rebellion a certain Officer, in the Service of the Parliament, being taken Prisoner by the Royalists, was by them kindly asked, How it was possible a Gentleman of his Education and Improvements could be engaged in so unrighteous a Cause? To whom he made this Reply; “ that he had not, perhaps, “ considered the Merits of the Cause so carefully as “ he ought to have done; being *prejudiced*, as he “ knew many others were, against his Majesty’s “ Service, by seeing the loose and disorderly Lives “ of many Cavaliers.” And the same poor Prejudice biased many against the Church, in favour of the Sectaries of those Times. The greater Strictness of *these* in certain Points and Duties of Religion was no small Advantage to their Cause; and,

and, to give them their due, they were not wanting to make the most of it, by setting themselves forth, Ministers and People, as the *Gens sacra* (so I think *Lewis du Moulin* calls them) holy Men, of *whom the World was not worthy*; while the Bishops and Clergy were constantly represented as not only *Strangers to*, but even *Haters* and *Deriders* of serious Godliness; and the Laity adhering to them, almost one and all, as an ignorant, worldly, lewd, drunken, blasphemous Crew, a *World lying in Wickedness*. By this well chosen Topic for Declamation, they drew great Numbers after them. Dry Disputations about Church Government, and other Points in Difference between us, few of the People were either disposed or qualified to enter much into. They could not well judge of the Truth or Falshood of Principles and Doctrines; but they could easily distinguish between a sober and a sensual, a strict and a disorderly, a good and a bad Life. And when they had found who they were that led the best *Lives*, they had found, as they thought, who had the best *Religion*. The old Managers of the Dissenting Cause would have been loth, I guess, to offer this Argument to the World in a *strict* and *logical* way; but were willing, 'tis plain, the Multitude, as they did, should run away with it. The Pretence was specious, and not ill suited to those Times, when there confessedly was, among *them*, a greater Strictness in some laudable Practices of Religion, than was, commonly, seen among the Members of the Church; a greater Difference in their Lives, than there *now* appears to be. The present Degeneracy and Corruption of Manners is so great, and so nigh universal, as leaves little room, a Man would think, for either *Harangue* or *Argument* of this nature. But 'tis a Topic, I perceive,

perceive, too popular and captivating, to be easily forsaken; and we see your Writers now and then striving to make something of it. And the *Humble Attempt*, &c. which you so heartily recommended (for your Recommendation, added to that Curiosity I had before to see every thing of that ingenious Gentleman's, set me immediately upon reading it) makes, here and there, some Efforts that way. And though the very *Attempt to revive practical Religion* among Dissenters, whom it is chiefly written for, and more particularly suited to, plainly implies in the Author an Opinion that it is, at present, in a low and languishing State, and ready to die away among them; yet he has taken care to intersperse, up and down, some Intimations, that there is yet such a wide Difference in the Lives of Churchmen and Dissenters, as may well recommend the Religions of the later (any, or all of them, I suppose) to our Choice and Preference.— I shall beg leave to lay before you some Strictures which I have drawn up on those Parts of the Book which have relation to the Subject of our Discourse, particularly, where he asserts, and, at large, maintains, that you are not only under *special Obligations*, but also enjoy divers *peculiar Advantages* above us in Matters of Religion, and towards rising to the highest Degrees of Christian Holiness and Perfection; and then add some farther Considerations, which did not occur to my Thoughts at the time of our late Conversation, in hopes thereby to *finish* your Conviction.

I begin then, with those *Obligations* which you and other Protestant Dissenters are supposed to be under to a more exemplary Holiness of Life. These, Sir, I do assure you, I am no way inclined to dispute. You shall think, for me, there are as many of them lying upon you, as you please. The more
and

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and greater you apprehend them to be, the more likely you will be to comply with them, and to be led thereby to those higher Attainments in Religion to which this worthy Gentleman is conducting you. Yet I cannot but observe, most of the *special Obligations*, which he suggests, are fitter, though I hope they were not intended, to stir up in your Minds a Spirit of bitter Strife and Animosity against the Church and Churchmen, than a Spirit of Holiness and Sanctification among yourselves.

One special Obligation, it seems, to your living holily, that so you may secure your eternal Interests in the *next* World, is taken from its being your Portion to suffer so much in *this*. You are therefore bid—*Awake, awake, my Friends.—Do you not aim at something glorious and divine, that will counterpoize all the Evils you sustain? Awake—and let your Character and Piety brighten upon the World; let your uncontested Virtues shine among Men; let them efface all the Gloom and Darkeness that is thrown upon your Names, and overpower the unrighteous Scandal. What? shall we be cast out of all public Offices, Trusts, and Salaries, as Men unworthy of civil Benefits and Honours, and, in many Instances, be retrenched of the more private and common Profits of this World, and yet content ourselves to obtain none of the Treasures, that relate to another World, in the room of them? Shall we bear the Scoffings of our Neighbours, and be derided as Fools and Fanatics? Shall we be reviled as Men of Humour and Hypocrisy, as Deceivers and false Brethren, and content ourselves to bear all these Indignities in the present Life, without gaining any thing by it, with regard to Grace, Righteousness, and Life to come?**—But why, I pray, all this unreasonable Ag-

* p. 194.

gravation? Why all this *Entbusiasm*? this Vehemence of Expression? this Pomp of Words? Does the Occasion *require* it? or, indeed, will it *bear it*? In my poor opinion, these are Things fitter to be said to the late *Saltzburgh Emigrants*, than to Protestant Dissenters in *South Britain*. If your Case, Sir, is here rightly represented, you must have a sad time of it. One cannot imagine less, than that some of you are condemned in *heavy Fines* or haled to *Prison*; that others dare not *shew their Heads*; or are *booted thro' the Streets* with Reproach and Obloquy, or *bissed off the Exchange*, and affronted in all public Companies; and private Conversations. But is there any thing like it? There may be perhaps here and there a *pleasant* Fellow who has his *Joke* for you, or a *malapert* one, who shall call you *Fools* or *Fanatics*. But are there none who have their Flings, too, at Churchmen, and for their *Fools* and *Fanatics* return them the Compliments of *mere Formalists*, *angry Bigots*, *fiery Zealots*, *Sons of Violence*, *furious Persecutors*, *Popishly affected*; *Enemies to the present Settlement of the Crown*, *Haters of Godliness and godly Men*, and the like? I doubt there are; and those, too, of a higher Class than such of us as are commonly guilty of the Petulancies abovementioned. And yet, I think, I should hardly reckon this a reasonable Topic to argue upon with my Friends of the Established Church; nor call upon them to take care to be happy in the next World, *that so they may counterpoize all the Evils they sustain in this* from the Hands of Dissenters.

I don't believe you, Sir, can ever approve of those invidious Complaints of Persecution and Oppression with which your Writers have filled the World for many Years past. For you can't help
seeing

seeing there is not the least Reason for them, and that they are evidently meant only to serve a Cause. 'Tis a fine thing to have the Credit of being persecuted for Religion, when one feels nothing of it. And besides, when the Notion of such a thing once gets among the blind and undiscerning Multitude, it may help to stir up and mislead their Passions; excite their Pity, and bring in Converts to your Churches. But, methinks, they should have had some Consideration of, and Reverence for others, whose Eyes are more open than those of the Vulgar, yet can't discover the least Colour or Pretence for these heavy Complaints, and plainly see they are altogether groundless. For my own part, I never think of them without thinking of *Monf. De Meaux*; and his *Pastoral Letters* to the *Protestants of France*; and whether were the greater, the *Assurance* of that *Frenchman*, in telling the Protestants there, in the midst of their Sufferings and Terrors, that they had suffered nothing, that *no Violence had been offered to any one of them, in his Person or Goods, and that they had been so far from enduring Torments, that they had not so much as heard them mentioned*; or the *Modesty* of these, while in the full Enjoyment of Ease, Security, and Credit, they complain of Hardships and Oppressions, which of these (I say) were the greater, one is at some loss to determine.

As to your being *retrenched of the more private and common Profits of the World*, I know not well what the Gentleman means. But this I know, that a Dissenter in Trade (as most of you are) may be pretty secure of *all* of the same Way, and has commonly too *his Share* of his Conforming Neighbours (who, I'll say that for them, seldom trouble themselves much where they lay out their Money) for his Customers. And this, I hope, you will

allow is no Discouragement to — the Dissention. Were all the Members of the Church to follow their Examples, confining their Dealings to themselves, in the same Manner and Degree your People do, it would make the Meetings a good deal thinner than they are, and be, in fine, *the shortest Way with the Dissenters*. — Excuse me, good Sir, these last Words, which, I am sensible, have had, since the Days of *De Foe*, a disagreeable Sound in the Ears of all honest Men, as well as Dissenters. But, I use them not, I declare, like that insidious Wretch, by way of Proposal or Advice to those of our Communion, but merely by way of Reply to this Author's Complaint, that, by being Dissenters, they are great *Losers* as to *the common Profits of the World*. According to all the Observations I can make, they are far enough from being *Losers*, on that account; so far, that, if I had a Son brought up to any Trade, and had no Consideration, either for him or myself, of another World, I should be ready to say to him, at setting up — *My Son, get Money; and, in order to that, be a Dissenter*. — I cannot, indeed, pretend to any *Experience*, or much *Insight* into Matters of *Trade*; but I have Eyes to see, and Ears to hear what passes in the World. However, Sir, I am willing to put the Matter to *You*, and leave it with *your Conscience*, Whether you really think your being Dissenters (taking you one with another) is any Prejudice to you, in the Shop? Or did *You*, in particular, find it any to yourself, upon the *Exchange*? Or do you really believe, you might have raised, by Commerce, a fairer Estate than you have done, in case you had been a Churchman?

The other Grievance (if any Grievance it be) he complains of, that your Friends are shut out from all *Offices, Trusts, Salaries, civil Benefits, and Honours*,

CHURCHMEN *and* DISSENTERS. II

is indeed more manifest. Yet I will engage, as simple as I sit here, it shall be removed, when they will lay down their Enmity to the Church, that is, in short, to one half part of the Constitution. And one would hope, they have not the Conscience to ask it, upon other Terms.

Their being Enemies, I expect you will tell me, to *one* part of the Constitution is not Ground enough for their being excluded from the *other*. Let it be then said, they are Enemies to both; for, certainly, they ought to be so esteemed. Church and State, here in *England*, are so incorporated and united, that they must have, like the married Pair, the same Friends and Enemies, and stand or fall together. And, as whoever is admitted into the Service of *one* has thereby great Opportunities of hurting the *other*, so whoever *actually* ruins *one* will be found *eventually*, if not *intentionally* to ruin the *other* also. And this is surely Reason enough why the Enemies or Disaffected to *either* should be excluded from *both*. It is upon these Grounds that it is thought reasonable and necessary (and, I dare say, by Dissenters, as well as others) that Nonjuring Clergymen should be excluded from all Promotions in the Church. A Nonjuring *Rector*, *Vicar*, or *Curate* has, to be sure, by Virtue and in the Way of his Office, Means and Opportunities to weaken and undermine the Civil State: and, if he should actually do it, the Church itself, together with the State, would be endangered. *He* therefore is shut out of the Church. Very well. But has not then (for Example) a Dissenting Mayor of a Corporation, by the Influence he has upon the Legislature, (especially as those Gentry *now* order Matters) greater Opportunities to undermine and subvert the Church? In which Case, the Civil State, I doubt, would stand as tottering, as the Church would in the other. And why, then, must

not *be* be excluded from the Service of the State? In a word, *common Sense* (if I have any) cries loudly, "Let *both* be excluded, or *both* admitted;" there being no Reason, that is fit to be owned, for excluding or admitting *one*, which will not hold as good for admitting, or excluding the *other*. And, since the *Church* is content to exclude, and lose the Services of many learned and pious Men, who are perfectly well affected to it, for the Safety of the *State* (though for its own too in the Issue) I think the *State* can do no less, in regard to the Safety of the *Church* (and indeed its own, in the Event of things) than return the Civility by keeping the Enemies of the Church out of *its* Service.

I entreat you, Sir, not to tell me that the Government may greatly suffer by being deprived of the Services of many wise and able Men. For if you will please to look about you, you will see something daily passing to convince you, that there are scarcely half so many Services, many as there are, to be done the Government, as there are *bumble Servants*, Members of the Church of *England*, and of sufficient Abilities (as they, at least, think) to do them; and the letting in a Multitude of Competitors and Expectants more than there are already, might only serve to encrease our Factions, as so many more must be, on course, disappointed of their Desires and Hopes, (which, doubtless they will, all, think just and reasonable,) and, consequently, grow discontented. Nor let their good Behaviour towards the present Government be pleaded: If they *have* behaved well towards the Government, they have done their Duty, but *they have done no more than was their Duty to do, and are unprofitable Subjects*. Have they stood always firm in their Allegiance, and never been found in any rebellious or seditious Practices? Then, with my consent, no
Pains

Pains and Penalties shall be inflicted on them; there shall be no Revocation of their *Toleration*; all their civil and religious Rights shall be preserved to them; and they shall live among us as securely, as the rest of his Majesty's good Subjects.

*Nec furtum feci, nec fugi, si mihi dicat
Servus; habes pretium, loris non ureris, aio.*

Non hominem occidi; non pasces in cruce corvos.

HORAT. *Epist. Lib. i. Ep. 16.*

As to any eminent and extraordinary Services they have ever rendered either to his present or late Majesty and their Government, they are not apparent to *me*. But were they ever so great, even tho' they had *placed* or *kept* the Crown on their Majesty's Heads, (as, I think, once, by their groundless and imprudent Boasts among their Neighbours^b *that they had now a King of their own, and should soon have the Churches too, they helpt to shake it*) whatever (I say) their Services to the Government may have been, it would be unreasonable, and *politically absurd* to reward them for them, by putting the Church into their Hands, by heaping upon them such Places of Power and Trust in the Government, as might enable them, and we are very sure, from their Principles and Affections, they would not fail to make use of, to overturn it.

As this Writer's Complaint is in itself *unreasonable*, so I would observe, it is somewhat *unreasonably* and *improperly* made in this Place:

Non erat his locus.

It looks a little odd, to find such heavy Com-

^b See Remarks upon the Lord Bishop of *Bangor's* Treatment of the Clergy and Convocation, p. 42. where this Behaviour of theirs is asserted and justly described.

plaints,

plaints, and these so often repeated, of your being cast out from all *Offices, Salaries,* and so forth, in a Book written purely to *revive Practical Religion* among you. Is it to be thought, the admitting you to *these* would be a *means* to *revive* it? Quite the contrary. *Practical Religion*, in your *last* fifty Years of *Ease* and *Security*, has confessedly and visibly decayed; and there is no doubt but it would decay proportionally more in *another* fifty Years of *high Trusts, public Offices, and Court Employments*. So that whoever has more the *Religion of Dissenters* than the *Dissenting Interest* at heart, instead of *re-pining* at their being kept out of Civil or Military Employments, would rather *congratulate* them upon it.—The Doctor, I perceive, is not thoroughly in the Sentiments of *Joseph*, who, when his Brethren came down into *Ægypt*, instead of placing them, as he might have done, in the *Class* of *Soldiers* or *Priests*, plainly told *Pharaoh* they were *Shepherds*, tho' *Shepherds*, he knew, were *an Abomination to the Ægyptians*, and their being such, by the Constitution of the *Ægyptian* Government, made them incapable of *Places of Trust, Power, or Profit*, and the highest *Preferment* they could ever have, was being made *Pharaoh's Herdsmen*, and *Rulers* over his *Cattle*. He seems to have been afraid that *Pharaoh* would make them *Courtiers*, or *Commanders* in the *Army*, and to have taken this way to prevent it: He wanted to have them a *Land* appointed them, where they might live separate from the *Ægyptians*, and be at a distance from the *King's Court*, that *so* they might more easily keep their *Religion pure and undefiled*. If this Gentleman was not *so* Self-denying as to wish that *his Brethren* might be *excluded* from all *Trusts, Salaries, public Offices, and Court Employments*, yet he might well have been *content*, for a Reason like that of *Joseph*, they should

should be *without* them. Had he addressed himself to them in some such Manner as this; "You are, indeed, my Friends, excluded from public Offices and Employments? but *let not your Hearts be troubled*. As Protestant Dissenters, you make an open Profession of great Tenderneſs of Conſcience: But how hard is it, in this our Day, to keep a good Conſcience, and not be made *Servants of Corruption*, in public Trusts and Employments; and there are but few, as you have Reason to ſuſpect, that do it. There is a certain Contagion almoſt inſeparably adhering to them. Beſides, the Air of a Court, which they will oblige you to frequent, has always been held infectious.—*Exeat aula qui velit eſſe pius*. It makes the Heart diſſolute, cauſes a ſtrange Diſſipation of Thought, and fills the Mind with ſuch a Crowd of vain Images, as leaves little room for Objects of a more important and concerning nature. So that, far from a Matter of *Complaint*, I look upon it as one of the choiceſt *Advantages* you enjoy, above the Members of the National Church, of keeping a good Conſcience, and growing in Grace and Goodneſs; that our Rulers have thought fit to lay *you* under ſome Diſqualifications of this ſort."—If, I ſay, he had ſpoken to his Friends of public Offices and Honours thus *ſlightly*, and made *ſuch an uſe* of their being excluded from them, I don't think it would have looked amiſs, in a Treatiſe, purpoſely written to recover Diſſenters from the preſent Corruption that is in the World, to a better Senſe of Practical Religion, and more ſerious Godlineſs. I appeal to you, Sir, whether it would or not; nay, indeed, to this Gentleman himſelf, upon farther Conſideration.

He

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He says, *As you have the Courage to be singular in your Ways and Forms of Separation and Worship, you ought not to be ashamed or afraid to be singularly and eminently virtuous.*—It will be easily granted, you are very singular in your Forms of Worship and Ways of Separation. And, if I may take the liberty to recommend to You, Sir, one or two Books, as you have done one to me, I could wish you would please to peruse ^c one of Dr. Durel, wherein he has sufficiently shown the Singularity of your Forms of Worship; and ^d another of the excellent Mr. Bingham, which has made appear, beyond all Possibility of Reply, that the Grounds and Principles of your Separation from the Church of *England* are also singular, and such as would oblige you, were you to hold to them, to separate also from the *French Protestant Churches*, as well as *ours*. And I doubt not but the same might be shown after the same way in relation to other Churches, not excepting your Sister Church of *Scotland*, which, I humbly conceive, you cannot conform to, without renouncing, at least, without laying down on this Side the *Tweed*, to be taken up again at your Return, some of the main Principles which the Separation here in *England* is built upon. But, how singular soever you may be in these things, I don't see that any mighty Degree of Courage is required to make Profession of them. For though you are few, compared with the great Body of the Church of *England*, you are yet enough to keep one another in Countenance; and, if we may judge by some of your late high Demands and bold Transactions thereupon (which you, Sir, however, I have heard, would have no

^c Entitled, *A View of the Government and public Worship of God in the reformed Churches.*

^d *French Churches Apology for the Church of England.*

hand in promoting) to hold up and support one another in a pretty good Degree of Assurance. I would have you consider, it asks a great deal more Courage and holy Fortitude to be *singularly virtuous* in a degenerate Age, and to maintain this Character at every Call of Providence, by asserting the Cause of God in the Company of profane Men, or in the midst of Infidels and Apostates, and withstanding the Solicitations and Importunities of Sinners, when they entice us; by being unawed by the Indifference, the Frowns, or the Threats, and not allured by the Smiles, the Caresses, or the Promises of the Great, to violate one's Duty in any Instance: I say, it requires a great deal more Courage and Resolution to be thus *singularly virtuous* in the midst of a corrupt World, than it does to own one's self, in this Country of almost unlimited Religious Liberty, a *Presbyterian* or *Independent*. How strangely then does this Argument conclude! It is thus: "Since
 " you have, my Friends, that *small Degree* of Cou-
 " rage that may be sufficient to profess yourselves,
 " *here*, Protestant Dissenters, it will be thought,
 " let me tell you, mighty strange, if you should
 " want that *higher Degree* of it, which is requisite
 " to your being *singularly virtuous* in the midst of a
 " wicked World."—This is the Reasoning; and false as it is, and must appear to all who have the least Knowledge of the World, I shall yet be glad if it prevail with any Dissenter to lead a Life more singularly and eminently holy. Only I was loth to let it pass, without taking the Sting out of it.

He tells you, p. 204. *You profess to maintain and vindicate Christian Liberty by your Dissent from the Established Church, and bear up and support the Freedom of Conscience, in opposition to all the Inventions and Impositions of Men.*—As if you had no *Inventions* and *Impositions* of your own! But, at

present, let that pass. Let us see, what Use he makes of your having discharged yourselves from the *Impositions* of the Church. Why, he infers from it two things; *the first*, a special Obligation upon you to see to it, that *you turn not your Freedom from the imposed Rules of Men into a Release of your Conscience and Practice from any of the Laws of God*. But, I doubt, it will be found, that the releasing yourselves from the Unity and Communion of the Church, only for enjoining one or two decent and becoming Ceremonies, *is releasing your Conscience and Practice from one of the Laws of God*; he nowhere, in his holy Word, allowing you to go out from any sound Part of the Catholic Church, on any such account. The other Inference is, that *you impose not your own private Opinions, or particular unscriptural Practices, upon your Neighbours, and particularly, not upon your Brethren of the Established Church*. This is very well, and reasonably inferred from the Premises. But how does he infer from *these* Premises a special Obligation upon *You* to live holier Lives than other People? *That* was the Point in view; but he seems to have quite forgot it; or, I rather believe, he did not forget it, but knew not how to *infer* it from *such* Premises as have no manner of Connection with it. He may truly be said to have *taken hold* (as, I think, he somewhere speaks) *of this Topic*, and to have *seized* it for his Use, though it happens to be of no use to him. I dare say, it did not *offer* itself to *his*, nor would to the Mind of *any other Man*, who should set himself to think about these Matters. 'Tis pretty plain, our *Impositions* are here introduced, not to enforce upon your People a more eminent Holiness of Life, which he saw they were no way fit for; but only to shew them (as he had before observed ^d) it would not be

improper, now and then, to do) “ some Reason
 “ (such as it is) why they separate from the public
 “ Worship of the Parish.”

You have another Obligation to a strict and holy Life, taken from the Characters of the *old Puritans*. And I am ready to allow there is some Propriety and Pertinency in setting before you their Examples, whose Children and Followers you *pretend* to be: only the following their Examples should not have been urged in the gross, and without proper Distinctions. For some of them were very unruly, disorderly, and seditious Men; while others, 'tis true, had a good Character for their blameless Lives, Strictness in Religion, and for their quiet and peaceable Behaviour; and, I will add, (what I wish, Sir, you would be pleased to consider) for making a Conscience of separating from the Church for every thing they happened to dislike in it. When you follow them in *this*, which is the *main* thing, as you do in some other of their Sentiments, *they* shall be then called *your* Fathers, and *you* shall be called *their* Children. But till then, I cannot agree to it.

I would also own your *Obligation* supposed to arise from the peculiar *Advantages* in Matters of Religion, you are here pretended to enjoy above the Members of the Church, if I was *satisfied* of those Advantages. But indeed I am *not*; and therefore shall farther attend your Author, to let you see, if I can, that you are not possessed of any such *peculiar Advantages* as *he* supposes you to be.

If all these Advantages had been supposed to arise from the *peculiar Circumstances and Situations* of Dissenters, it would hardly have been worth while, nor should I have had any thought of contesting them. But it is a different Case, when they are said to arise out of the very *Doctrines and Points in Con-*

troverſy between us; for, *then*, the Church is interested in the Cause: And much more, when it is pretended, as it is here, that the Doctrines and Institutions of the Church are not only *less profitable* and *edifying*, not so well fitted for the Improvement of Men in Religion and Increase of Piety among them, but are *positively destructive* of these things, and *naturally tend* to turn Men away from Holiness of Life. *Then* the Imputation rises higher, and calls loudly for some Animadversion and Reproof.

He begins thus: *You [Dissenters] are not in so much danger of taking up with the outward Forms of Religion, instead of the inward Power and more spiritual Parts of it, as your Neighbours may be.*—He then instances—*You are in no such danger of mistaking Baptism for inward and real Regeneration, as those who are educated in the Established Church; to which unhappy and dangerous Mistake the Office of Baptism in the Church of England has been thought to give too much Countenance.*—It matters not much what *has been thought* by some People. Their Thoughts about many things are so unaccountable, that there is danger of *their* mistaking almost every thing. And I must wonder a little at your Author, that he should poorly take up with saying, the Office of Baptism *has been thought* to give Countenance to such unhappy and dangerous Mistakes, when he would not himself venture, upon his own Judgment, to fix such a Charge upon it. However, he cites the Places in the Office of Baptism which *have been thought* to give them Countenance; as where the Child is said after its Baptism to be *regenerated, and grafted into the Body of Christ's Church*; and, again, to be *regenerated with God's Holy Spirit*. Will it then be denied, that a baptized Christian is regenerated? Is he not *born again*? And *being born again*, in the figurative Scripture Sense,

Sense, what is it more or less, than being put into a new State? And is not this done to every Christian at his Baptism? Nay, does not the Scripture use the very Term we are speaking of to express his Entrance by Baptism, into this new State? As in those Words of our Saviour to *Nicodemus*, *Except a Man be born of Water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*; and those of *St. Paul*, which run parallel with them, *We are saved by the washing of Regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost*. For my part, I am rather of opinion, that we are regenerated *only* in Baptism; and that Scripture and Antiquity so appropriate the Word, as to exclude any Conversion that does not accompany Baptism, from being signified by that Name. The twenty-seventh Article of the Church of *England* expressly teaches, that *Baptism is the Sign of Regeneration or new Birth*. And the *Directory* itself says the same thing. For, there, the Minister is ordered to instruct the People at Baptism, *that it is a Seal of the Covenant of Grace; of our ingrafting into Christ, and of our Union with him; of Remission of Sins, Regeneration, Adoption, and Life eternal*. And he is ordered to pray—*that God would join the inward Baptism of his Spirit with the outward Baptism of Water; make this Baptism to the Infant a Seal of Adoption, Remission of Sin, Regeneration, and eternal Life*.—This, I suppose, is true and wholesome Doctrine in the *Directory*; in the *Articles of the Church*, tolerable; but, in its *Offices*, I perceive, it is false and exceeding dangerous. But how comes this about? How is it, that the *same* Doctrine, which in the *Directory* and the *Articles* is inoffensive, is so offensive and scandalous in its *Liturgy*? Why, Sir, the Case is plain. The *Directory* these Gentlemen approve; the *Articles* they are forced to subscribe, and therefore *must not be seen to contradict*;

tradict; but they don't subscribe the *Liturgy*; and so, may be as free with *that* as they please.

But, I suppose, his Quarrel with the Office of Baptism is for its countenancing, or *being thought* to countenance what he calls a *real and inward Regeneration*. But, if he means by *that* the Renovation of Mind and Spirit to real Holiness, by the Operation of the Holy Ghost, at the Time of Baptism, actually *effected and completed*; let him know, the Church of *England* does not assert or countenance, in new born Infants, any such thing. They are, indeed, declared, after Baptism, to be *regenerated by God's Holy Spirit*; but that *may* only signify their being born again, or put into a new State by Baptism, which is the *Appointment* of the Spirit. For you must observe, Sir, the several Offices and Administrations of the Gospel are attributed to the Spirit, and represented as his Ordinances and Appointments. But to say nothing of *this*: There is doubtless in Baptism a real Efficacy *towards* the Renovation of Mind and Life. For, if the Holy Ghost, who is the great Agent in this Work, the Principle of future Newness and Holiness of Life, which will certainly produce, when the Infant is grown up, actual Holiness, provided a wrong Education, evil Habits and Examples, and other things, do not hinder: If, I say, the Holy Spirit of Grace is given in Baptism (which, I suppose, we have on all hands agreed it to be) I cannot see why it should be thought an *unwarrantable and dangerous*, or so much as an *improper* thing, to pray that the Baptized *may be*, or to declare that he *is* regenerated thereby: As a Field *properly may*, and *is* commonly called Wheat, or any other Grain, though it be *newly* sown, and nothing *is yet*, nor is it certainly known, whether any thing like a Crop *will ever* come up.

I per-

I perceive, the Danger, which your Author apprehends from the Church's asserting Regeneration by Baptism, is this, that, if the baptized believes he is by Baptism regenerated, he will, of course, believe he shall infallibly be saved. But vain are his Fears! this and every Benefit besides conferred in Baptism being to be lost by a wicked Life; and the Members of the Church being constantly so *taught*, and so *believing*, notwithstanding *his* Insinuations of the contrary. You shall have his Words; and then judge what Reason he has for them. *I readily grant*, says he, *that many of the Ministers of the Church and the wiser Christians do know and believe, that there is no such inward Grace and Salvation really communicated by Baptismal Water.* At first reading, perhaps, you will think this a *gracious* and *charitable* Concession. But read it again, consider it, and observe, if you please, the *Implications*? Are they not plainly *these*? That the Ministers of the Church are *divided* in their Opinions about this Matter; that *many*, or, as it should rather seem, *most* of them, and all the Christians that are not of the *wiser* Sort, are of this Belief, *that Grace and Salvation are really communicated by the Baptismal Water.*—Communicated too *by* the Baptismal Water! that is, surely, by some *physical* Causality in the Water; for that, it should seem, is the Opinion he would fasten upon them; whereas they believe, whatever is communicated is *by* the Holy Spirit, only in the use of the Water, according to God's Appointment. And then again, *really* communicated! which, one would think, is meant to insinuate, what would have been too daring to assert, that they think them *so* communicated that they can never be lost. And indeed, if he does not mean *that*, what he says is nothing to the purpose. Do you, Sir, now, or let any one else judge, if this Accusation

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cufation be not *weak*, as well as *groundless*. The Gentleman complains, *the Church has put in no Caution and Guard against this fatal Mistake, which its Members may so easily run into*. I doubt it has many, if Expressions implying the contrary to this Mistake may be called *Guards* and *Cautions* against it. But as to *formal express Cautions* against it, I really think there is no occasion for them. It is indeed proper to give the People frequent Cautions against resting in the outward Performances of Religion, such as Fasting, Praying, and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; because many really *are apt to do that*. But few, I believe, or none rest their Hopes of Salvation upon the mere Privilege of their Baptism. And it is a doubt with me, whether this Writer can name, or ever knew in his Life any one Member of the Church, who seriously believed he should be saved, be his Life what it would, merely because this Sacrament had passed upon him; who had taken up this Belief from the Offices of the Church, and made it the Occasion and Encouragement of his persevering in Wickedness of Life.

He goes on, and pushes the Matter yet farther. *The Answer in the Catechism, which Children are taught, does but too much confirm and establish them in this Mistake*. Therein they are taught to say, *that in their Baptism they were made Members of Christ, Children of God, and Inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven*. And he supposes their Parents, hearing *this*, will encourage them to believe, that the Case being so, they are born again as much as they need be, and shall certainly be saved. I must here, again, make a doubt, and put it to his Conscience, whether he ever knew any Parents who have taught their Children this Lesson. If any have, they must have done it in open contradiction to those
better

better Lessons they and their Children both are constantly taught at Church. They are taught *there*, that these Titles do really denote no more than the common Privileges of professed and baptized Christians; that they do not import any such Change, actually wrought in the Powers of their Souls, and the Course of their Lives, as *You* commonly call Regeneration or new Birth; and much less imply any Certainty of their Salvation.

As to the first of these Characters or Titles, *viz. a Member of Christ*, the vulgar sort of Dissenters always speak, nay, in truth, this Author himself speaks of him, in the Book I am now considering, p. 41. as one *who is a Saint, in a State of Grace, and renewed to Faith and Holiness; and as made such, not (as some have imagined) by the Water of Baptism, but by the Operation of the Word and Spirit of God on the Heart, and by diligent Attendance on all the appointed Means and Methods of converting Grace.*—But we are taught and believe he is only a Member of *Christ's* mystical Body, or the Church, (*for we are all baptized into one Body*) and as a Member of *Christ*, or of his Church, may be, at the same time, (unless *St. Paul* too be unhappily and dangerously mistaken) a *Member of a Harlot*, that is, a notorious and grievous Sinner, so he is never the nearer Heaven for being dignified with this glorious Title. — In like manner, a *Child of God* is a Title always *appropriated* by Dissenters to the *Godly*. But it stands for no more in the Catechism than it does in many Places of Scripture, that is, for one who is taken or adopted by Baptism into the Family of God (*for, says St. Paul, ye are all the Children of God by Faith in Christ Jesus.*) But then there are Children of the Kingdom, who for being rebellious shall be cast into utter Darkness. *And if they are Children, as the Apostle argues,*
E *then*

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then Heirs. But the Inheritance may be forfeited. Thus, you see, the whole Ground of all this Confusion and Mistake is your accustoming yourselves to the Use of these Phrases either in an *unscriptural* Sense, or in *only one* of the Scripture Senses, the straitest and most limited; while the Catechism uses them in the most extensive one. You apply them to those, and only those, whom you believe to be in a State of Grace and Salvation, which they cannot fall from; and then the Church is presently censured as erroneous, for applying them to all visible, baptized Christians. But the Error is your own; wholly arising from your Misapplication of Scripture Language. And let any one judge, if it be not fitter you should correct your Phraseology, than that the Church should alter her public Forms, which are perfectly agreeable to Scripture Language, to make them accord with it.

You say, the forementioned Titles are too *high* and *august* to be given *indiscriminately* to all baptized Christians.—But Mr. Baxter did not think so. For he says in express Words*, that a *Person professing the Christian Faith, or the Infant of such, is, by Baptism, solemnly entred a visible Member of Christ, and his Church, a pardoned regenerate Child of God, and an Heir of Heaven.* And therefore, *that it is not unfit that the Minister call him so, supposing only, that, in foro Ecclesiæ, he were the due Subject of Baptism.* And the Commissioners at the Savoy Conference, of whom he was one, who peck't at every thing, and made it their business to find Difficulties where there were none, only proposed, in the manner of the Expression, some Alteration, as, that the Child should answer, that, in Baptism,

* *Christian Directory*, p. 690.

he was, not *made a Member of Christ, &c. but visibly admitted into the number of the Members of Christ, the Children of God, and the Heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven.* An Alteration, as one would think, for Alteration's sake, both evidently meaning the same thing. So that, it seems to me that the Pretence of Danger from teaching Children this Lesson was but a late Thought, suggested, probably, at first, to your Writers, by the affected Dialect of your People, before mentioned, and by their Help become so current and popular among us.

But now, Sir, as to the danger of teaching Children, that have been duly baptized, that the forementioned Titles are really *theirs*, pray consider, that *it seemed good to the Holy Ghost* to give them those Titles, before we did. And will you presume to say, that the Words, which the Holy Ghost uttered, have a natural Tendency to lead Men into a false Security, to make them rest in external Privileges, and conclude that without Holiness they may be saved? No, Sir: Such high Privileges and Honours conferred on all visible Christians naturally tend, as they were certainly meant, to promote quite other Purposes, and some of them *the very reverse* of these. They tend to exalt the Goodness of God, and the Grace of the Gospel, whereby we are invested with them. They naturally suggest our Duty and Obligation to live so as those Privileges, and Dignities, and such an honourable Relation to God and *Christ* require; and shew us the Danger of living otherwise, as it will render our Fall the more dreadful, and we shall be thereby *thrown down*, and sink deeper into Hell, for being thus *exalted into Heaven*. These are the proper and natural Uses to be made of our being adorned with such Privileges and Honours: And these our People

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are constantly taught to make of it. And they are never like to make any other, not to be sure *that* which your Author apprehends; at least, if he and his Brethren, by pretending they *justly may*, do not *shew them the way* to do it.

I see it number'd among your Advantages, that *you are freed from the Inventions of Men and the Incumbrance of human Ceremonies in divine Worship*. Truly, Sir, our People are not much incumber'd with human Ceremonies. For in the ordinary daily Service there is not *one, legally* enjoined, unless *Kneeling* at Prayer be a Ceremony; and if it be, I don't see why *standing* should not be accounted such. Be it as it will, the Church surely must have as good a Right to impose Kneeling in the public Worship upon her Members, as you and other Dissenters have to *impose* it upon your Children and Servants in your Family Devotions. If *ever* a Ceremony may be used in divine Worship, it should, methinks, rather be in *that* which is *public*, than in *private* Worship. But if you think otherwise, you may, if you please, come to Church, and behave there (as your People commonly do, whenever they *do* come among us) *with as little Ceremony* as you do at Meeting. And you had much better do so, than live in your present unwarrantable Separation from it.

Two or three of these Ceremonies he desires he may be permitted to mention; by which, one would think, he meant to insinuate, he could have named, if he had pleased, twenty or thirty, but would only decimate them, in his great Clemency. The first of them is *the Sign of the Cross at Baptism*. This, it seems, according to this Gentleman, is a great Incumbrance to our People. But *how* are *they* incumber'd with it? None but the Minister has any concern in it; and he, I fancy, neither
finds

finds nor thinks it to be any Incumbrance at all. But I wonder most at his way of talking, as if it were your peculiar Happiness, for which you are to bless yourselves, that you have not *bad that Figure made upon your Foreheads, nor* (as he is pleased to express himself) *passed under it*. Why, Sir, do you think it would have done you any harm, if you had? Had it been your fortune to have received your Baptism at Church, and *passed there under the Figure of the Cross*, do you conceive it would have made you a worse Christian? And if not, with what Reason are these Questions put to the Consciences of your People?—*Do you remember a crucified Saviour, and let him dwell upon your Thoughts more than they do who make use of it? Are you more courageous and manful in the Profession of the Gospel, in a dangerous Hour? Are you less ashamed to confess the Faith of Christ crucified?*—Is this, Sir, reasonably expected? Could not he be content with your being *as* mindful of a crucified Saviour, *as* courageous in confessing the Gospel, but you must be *more* so? And was it not enough, if you were *as* little ashamed to confess the Faith of *Christ* crucified, but you must be *less* ashamed of it? The putting these Questions to your Consciences plainly supposes the Sign of the Cross to be *operative*, to have a bad Influence and Effect upon the future Life, an invisible Power to make one *afraid* to profess the Faith of *Christ* crucified, *unmindful* of his Cross, or *ashamed* of it. So that, instead of making it a Sacrament, or a Means whereby we receive the Grace of God, which we are groundlessly charged with doing, *he* makes it (if I may call it so) an *Anti-sacrament*, or a Means whereby we are *deprived* of that Grace. In doing of which he *is* guilty of as great and unwarrantable Presumption, as we *should have been* in doing of the other, having no more
 Authority

Authority to make a Sign of human Invention a means to *stop and obstruct*, than we have to make it a means to *convey* divine Grace.

The next Ceremony (as he calls it, though, surely, not with his usual Correctness) is the *Institution of Godfathers and Godmothers*. And a Man would wonder which way this Institution is any *hindrance* to a holy and godly Life. Can you, Sir, I desire to know, imagine *how*? One would really think, if they did no *good*, they could not, possibly, do any *barm*; and that, if they did nothing, as we were growing up, towards *leading us on the Ways of God*, they would not, however, *turn us away* from them.

Indeed, he tells you, *You are ready to imagine that the Promises of these Sureties arise so high, as to give Parents too much Indulgence and Excuse for their own personal Neglect of the Instruction of the Child*. Where, again, I cannot but admire his Discretion. For, as he had said before, the Office of Baptism *has been thought* to give countenance to a certain Error, while he would not, himself, say it does; so now, instead of saying, the Promises of the Sureties *do* rise so high, he only says, *You are ready to imagine* that they do. And yet this Expression, wary as it is, is so contrived as to beget in the Reader's Mind a Belief that the thing is so, as much as if he had positively asserted it.—That the common sort of Dissenters have such an *Imagination* is true enough. I have found it in all whom I have ever conversed with upon this Subject: And it is one of their heaviest Charges, and loudest Outcries against the Church, that it obliges Godfathers and Godmothers to make such Promises in behalf of the Infant, as neither they, nor any Man living, can ever be sure it will perform. And when they are desired to shew us any such Promises, we are always referred
to

to the Sureties Answers to the Baptismal Interrogatories, made by *them* in the Child's Name. These Answers seem to be grossly mistaken for so many Promises made by the Sureties, in their *own* Names, concerning the future Faith and Practice of the Child, as if they engaged thereby (for instance) that, when it is grown up, it actually *shall* believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith, that it *shall* renounce the Devil, and all his Works, and *shall* also obediently keep God's Commandment: Whereas the Church considers these Answers as the *Child's* Answers, only made by its Representatives. They contain *its* Part of the baptismal Covenant or Contract, which because, by reason of its tender Age, it cannot, itself, utter, is to be uttered by its Sureties. And that this is so, is plain from the Address, which the Minister directs to the Godfathers and Godmothers, immediately before the Interrogatories, where he says to them, *This Infant must faithfully, for his part, promise by you, that are his Sureties, (until he come of Age to take it upon himself) that he will renounce, &c.* And the Priest's Exhortation to the Sureties after Baptism begins thus, *Forasmuch as this Child has promised by you his Sureties, to renounce the Devil, and all his Works, to believe in God, and to serve him, &c.* And that the Sureties are, by the Church, considered, in this Affair, no otherwise, than as the *Mouth of the Child*, is yet plainer, from the third Question and the Answer thereto, *Wilt thou be baptized in this Faith? That, (say the Sureties) is my Desire.* It is evident, from the very Nature of the Subject, this is the Child's Answer, and so are all the rest. And accordingly, in the Baptism of such as are of riper Years, and able to answer for themselves, the Priest addresses the Persons themselves that are to be baptised, in this Manner, *Ye*
must

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must faithfully for your part promise, in the Presence of these your Witnesses, and this whole Congregation, that ye will renounce, &c. and then he demands of each, severally, the Baptismal Questions, which they, in their own Persons, return Answers to.— You see, Sir, here are no Promises and Engagements which any, besides the Child, are supposed to enter into, and to be bound by. And, if you will only please to give yourself the Trouble to read over the Office of public Baptism, you will not find, I do assure you, any Promises or Stipulations at all made by the Sureties in their own Names, (I mean any that are explicit.) They do indeed receive from the Minister an Exhortation, or Charge, concerning the Christian Education of the Child; and, by standing there to receive it, they are *justly supposed* to accept it. But this Charge, or Promise (if we *will* call it so) does not run so high, as to give the Parents any colourable Pretence for neglecting their Duty of bringing up their Child in the Fear of God. It does not bring upon the Sureties the Trouble and Expence of its Education, any more than of its Maintenance; but only lays them under an Obligation *to see, that it be taught what a solemn Vow, Promise, and Profession it had made by them, to call upon it to hear Sermons, to learn the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the ten Commandments, and all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his Soul's Health.* They are *to see* that the Infant be taught the Nature and Obligation of its Baptismal Covenant; that is, to have the *Oversight* of those that are to teach it. When one employs another *to see* that some particular Work be done as it ought, or when he appoints a Trustee to his Will, *to see* that it be duly executed, no body construes this to mean, that the Party so entrusted was to do the Work, or execute the Will, himself,

himself, but only to *superwise* those that are to *do*, and *execute* it. In like manner, the Charge delivered to the Sureties, and their Obligation to *see* that the Child be taught, is to be understood, as only importing an Obligation upon them to take a general *Overfight* of the Christian Part of its Education, to stir up the Parents, if there be need, to provide it for them; to admonish them, if they neglect to do it; and to take, themselves, all fitting Opportunities to put the Child in mind of its own Duty. Is this the Way for Parents to get *discharged* from their Obligations to instruct their own Children? May they *neglect* their Instruction, because they have provided Sureties, who are to admonish and reprove them for such Neglect? No Parent, I fancy, is so weak as to reason, upon the Case, after this manner.—I have, in my time, dealt with many Churchmen for not bringing up their Children in a more Christian manner than they did; yet never met with one, in my whole Life, who pleaded this in excuse for his Neglect, either in jest or earnest. No, Sir; every body knows, the Church does not mean, by the Appointment of Sureties, to take off from the Parents any Part of *their* Duty, but only to *supply* their *Negligences* and *Defects*, and make up, in some measure, what may be wanting in *their* Care. And is not the Church, do you think, securer of the religious Education of its young Members, by such a Provision, than if the Matter was left to the Consciences only of the Parents, some of whom, you know, are extremely *ignorant* of the Christian Religion, some *heretical* in their Opinions, and others *vicious* in their Lives, and so *cannot* teach them, or will teach them *wrong*, or not *think at all* about teaching them the Ways of God?

There is little doubt, but the Case of Children of very ignorant, very vicious, or heretical Parents coming to Baptism, often happens among Dissenters, as well as in the Church. When such Cases happen among you, I desire to know what *is to be*, what commonly *is*, done? Are such Children to be baptized without any Promises or Stipulations at all for their Christian Education? Or are they to be baptized upon the Stipulations of *such* Parents, which, at the same time, you own, nay, contend, are not fit to be taken by the Church? Or must they remain unbaptized till they come to Years of Discretion, and can answer for themselves, or till their Parents think fit to sue for their Baptism in the Church? This indeed is sometimes done, to my certain Knowledge; and even *now*, the very Day I am writing this, (so it happens) I have a Case of this sort brought before *me*. In these Cases, surely, it is much better they should be brought to Baptism, upon the Promises and Stipulations of some serious Persons, such as the Church requires those who undertake this Office should be. In *other things*, we can easily perceive the Advantage of such *double additional* Securities: And, I fancy, Sir, if your Lawyer, or whoever else has the Disposition of your Money, should lend it to every one that *wants*, or *has a mind* to borrow it, rejecting, *as not proper*, all other Securities besides his own, and then go about to make a *Merit* with you of his so doing, you would either think *he* was a very odd *wrong-headed* Man, or that he took *you* to be *such*, and find it high time to put your Affairs into other Hands.

The other Ceremony he mentions, which you, it seems, are happily freed from, is *kneeling at the Lord's Supper*. And of this he goes on talking just in the way he had done before of the Cross at Baptism,

Baptism, and some other Matters, demanding of those, " who scruple and renounce that Posture, " that they be *more* penitent and self-abased under " the Sense of their Sins, *more* thankful for the " condescending Love of *Jesus*, and that they " adore God and the Saviour with a *warmer* Zeal, " and *more* contrite Spirit, than those that practise " it." Another, who might be disposed to cavil, and take all Advantages, would hardly fail to lay hold of so fair a Handle as this Gentleman has here given, to charge him with *Quietism*: For, surely, these Passages have an Air of it; the very Essence thereof consisting in some *high Acts of Contemplation or Adoration*, without any *outward Expression* of them, which (say your *Quietists*) is very hurtful to them, and ought to be avoided and removed, that it may not hinder them. But, for *my* part, I don't think he had any intention to recommend or countenance that pernicious Doctrine; and do verily believe he meant *nothing worse*, than *discrediting* the Church, by making your manner of receiving the Sacrament (as he seems resolved to make *every thing else*, let it be what it will, wherein you differ from *us*) a just Ground for demanding of your People greater Devotion in the use of it. But is not this Demand a little extravagant? *The more inward Devotion, the less of it you outwardly express, and the slyer you are of shewing it!* Is not this quite *unnatural*, and therefore *unreasonable* to expect? Whoever considers Nature, would rather expect to find a greater degree of inward Devotion, where he observes, in the Gestures of the Body, a greater outward Appearance of it; not only, because the devout Gestures of the Body *naturally do*, and therefore *probably will* excite and stir up in the Mind something of Devotion, where there was none before, and heighten it where it was; but

also, because where-ever there is in the Mind and Heart a great degree of it, it will naturally shew itself in devout and reverential Gestures, and is not kept from it, without some difficulty.

Another of your Advantages, according to this Author is, *You are not confined to set Forms of Prayer, and a perpetual Repetition of them, in your public Worship, which are apt (he says) to introduce into Devotion, Formality, Coldness, and Indifferency of Spirit*; and he brings, as Witnesses of this Truth, some of yourselves, who, *after attending divine Service at Church, have much complained that their Hearts are apt to grow dull, negligent, and drowsy, under this uniform and constant rehearsal of the same returning Forms and Phrases*. This being told as a Matter of Fact, I shall not dispute the Truth of it, and shall only tell you of another Fact, which is as true, that some of *us*, having been at divine Worship among *you*, have been as drowsy over a long, uniform, continued Prayer, though it was quite new, or have been kept wakeful by mere *Indignation* and *Disdain*, at the Meanness, the vain Repetitions, the weak and wandring Thoughts, to say nothing worse of it. As to those who complained of their growing dull and negligent in divine Service at Church, I cannot but wonder at them, because the *Forms and Phrases* of our Prayers must be, to *them*, pretty new, whatever they are to *our own* People; as new, I doubt, as *the Forms and Phrases* of those Prayers, which they hear in their own Assemblies. Therefore, I think, it cannot be, that the Coldness and Indifferency of their Spirits should be owing to the *continual Repetition* of them; but it must be owing to another Cause; and that I suspect to be some *Aversion* they had before-hand conceived to them. Were they not taught, from their Infancy, both to *despise* and *bate* them? And if so, what

what wonder if they were *negligent* at them? Did they go to them with any real Design to *join* in them, and *offer them up* to God as their *own*, and not rather with an obstinate and fullen Resolution to have *no Part and Concern* in them? And if *this* were the Case, well might Drowsiness creep upon them. I fancy, Sir, if you were to make the Experiment but a while, you would find them otherwise affecting, than these People (it seems) did. The reading of the Scriptures, which makes a considerable Part of the Church Service, would be, I presume, no Weariness to *you*: And if the Prayers, the Psalms of *David*, the *Te Deum*, and other Hymns, and the Ten Commandments, solemnly pronounced, which God spake from the top of Mount *Sinai*, with *Thunders, and Lightnings, and the Voice of the Trumpet, exceeding loud, so that all the People in the Camp trembled*; if these (I say) should rock you *asleep*, I seriously profess, I should wonder at you. Let me intreat you, then, to make the trial; and if you do, I desire, as I justly may, you will comply with my Request in two things; one is, that you divest yourself of any *unreasonable Prejudice*, if there be any, you may have entertained against the Liturgy; the other, that you be *conformable* to the Rules of it, and behave as other devout Men and Women do. Make your humble Confession to Almighty God, and offer up the Prayers, *meekly kneeling upon your Knees*. Add your hearty *Amen* to each of them. Lift up your Heart, and raise your Voice in the alternate reading the Psalms of *David*. There is no pious and devout Person among *us*, I dare venture to say, but has experienced the Fitness of reading them *so*, to raise Devotion, and can truly say,

—oft th'alternate Chant

Of sacred Song wakens my highest Raptures.

Join

Join, with an audible Voice too, in all the *Responses*, which, though some of the ruder Sort among you have, in their way, ridiculed, are highly approved and commended by ^a one of the greatest of your own Writers, who rightly observes, that *the Use of the Tongue keeps awake the Mind, and stirs up God's Graces in his Servants; and that it was the Decay of Zeal in the People that first shut out the Responses.* These Responses, I am satisfied, alienate the Minds of many of your People from the Liturgy, as much, or, perhaps, more, than any thing else in it. The *Noise and Babbling* of them, (as they are wont to call it) is, it seems, very uncouth and offensive to them. And if a Quaker were to come into your Meetings, the *Noise and Bawling* (as he, doubtless, would call it) of your *Psalmody*, would be as offensive to him. The reason of both is plain; neither *he*, nor *you*, have any thing like those things, in that way of Worship you were brought up in, and have been always accusom'd to. But if you would only resolve to shake off the Prejudices of Education, and disengage your Minds from that Power and Force, which Custom has upon 'em; if you would come to our Churches, and *prevail with yourselves* to bring your Common Prayer Books along with you, and, when you are there, help to make yourselves, some Part of the *Noise* of these *Responses*, you would certainly find it no *Offence*, but a *Pleasure* to you; and I assure myself, the whole Service of the Church would appear to you otherwise affecting, than, possibly, you now think it to be.

If you still think the Variation of the Phrase is such a *mighty* Matter, let us try it, if you please, in one or two Instances. We in the Confession of our Sins to Almighty God, constantly say, *We have*

^a Baxter's *Christ. Direct.* p. 856. and *Cure of Ch. Divis.* p. 188.
offended

offended against thy holy Laws: You, perhaps, say at one time, *We have despised thy Commandments*; at another time, *We have committed Iniquity*; and, at a third, *We have done amiss, and dealt very wickedly*. We sue for Pardon and Restoration to the Divine Favour, saying, *Restore thou them that are penitent*: You, it may be, say now, *Forgive us all our Sins, which we truly and sincerely repent of*. Then, *We confess our Wickedness, and are sorry for our Sin, do thou forgive it*; and the next time, perhaps, use other Words of the same Import, returning, after a proper time, to the first Expressions; which I take to be one of the great Secrets of *Extempore Prayer*. Is it now possible for you to think, that the Attention of any *serious Man* will depend upon his using, *constantly, one of those Forms, or interchangeably, the other*? If it be so, it is a Sign he is not much wearied with the Burthen of his Sins, nor very solicitously concerned about the Forgiveness of them.

You will ask, perhaps, if I should not, *myself*, be weary of a Sermon, though it were ever so good, *a hundred times repeated*? To be sure, Sir, I should; but then, the Cases are widely different: I should be weary of a Sermon so often repeated, because, being stale, I should be no longer entertained with it; or, because, having so often heard it, it would teach me nothing now, but what it had taught me long, and many times, before: But, when I go to Prayers, I do not propose to myself *Entertainment, or Information and Instruction*, as your People, generally, seem to do: They seem to regard a Prayer with the same sort of Attention they do a Sermon, and they expect from the one the same sort of *Instruction or Entertainment* that they look for from the other; which the perpetual Repetition of the same Prayer not affording, they are disgusted at it, and

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and naturally fall into a drowsy Inattention to it : Whereas, if they would lay aside all Expectation of having their Judgments *informed*, or their Imaginations *entertained and diverted* by the Prayers of the Church, and look for nothing in them, besides a Representation of the real Wants and Desires of a Christian to Almighty God, in proper and suitable Expressions, the frequent rehearsal of them would not be such a Weariness, and they would join in them with great Devotion and Delight.

I am pretty sure I have not injured them, by supposing they apply themselves to a Prayer as they do to a Sermon, and expect the same sort of Edification from it. Some I have known, who have *frankly confessed* as much, that *they* go not to Church to pray ; *that*, said they, is the *Minister's* Business, and *ours* is to *mind* him, and *listen attentively* to him : And if any Man, of tolerable Discernment, will but attend your Meetings, observe the Countenances, and mark the Behaviour of the devoutest among you, he will plainly perceive, they are no otherwise employed in time of Prayer, than in Sermon-time ; except, perhaps, that, once in a while, he may discover in them some Emotion, or some short transient Aspiration unto God, when any particular Matter, or Expression, impresses their Minds more than ordinarily. On the other hand, you shall observe the devoutest Members of the Church upon their Knees, with uplifted Hands and Eyes, presenting, vocally or mentally, before God, every Petition (false as this Author supposes it to be) as properly, and as ardently also, as the Minister himself, his Soul hanging, if I may so speak, continually upon God, as the Souls and Eyes of the People do, in your Assemblies, in time of Prayer, upon the Lips of the Minister. This is the difference between *your* Devotion and *ours*, and this the boasted

boasted *Advantage* you have above us, by not being confined to the perpetual Repetition of a set Form of Words.

But, before I leave the Subject, I would desire to observe two things; and they are both suggested by your Author. He ^a elsewhere recommends, in some Cases, Forms of Prayer for private or Family-Devotion, supposing they may be used *there*, without Deadness and Formality of Spirit. And, if *there*, why not, I ask, *in the Church*? Then, he confesses, that an Aversion to Forms of Prayer is the Occasion of much Neglect of Family-Prayer^b. There are many, who, being bred up in the Hatred of all Forms, and not knowing how to pray without them, have gone on, to the end of their Lives, without Prayer, or any appearance of Religion, in their Houses, which they would not otherwise have done.

You have the Choice of your own Ministers: You are not confined to sit under such Teachers as some rich Patron shall provide for you. Why, are they like to be the worse for being provided by a rich Patron? I hope not; and am ready to think you, Sir, if you were Patron of a Church, would provide for it as well as you would have done, if you had not been Master of *one* of those *many* thousands you possess. But, perhaps, the Word *rich* came in here unawares, without any design to set a *Mark* upon the *Rich*, as ill Patrons. I will suppose it to be so; and that the Grievance meant is no more than their being provided by a *single* Patron, and the People's being obliged to sit under those whom he has provided, to be set over them. But, to my Apprehension, it is much at one, if they are forced to

^a *Guide to Prayer*, p. 155. *Humble Attempts*, p. 226.

^b *Ibid.*

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fit under such as *two or three*, or (suppose) *half a dozen* of the *richest* Members of the Church, and *principal Contributors*, shall provide, and bring in upon them: Which, I believe, is commonly the Case, especially in Country Places, a few leading Men, on any Vacancy, looking out for a fit Person to be their new Minister, the rest, generally, acquiescing, much as they do in the Parishes.

But, as you have a Power to choose, so you have to dismiss your Ministers. Yet, I have heard of some, who did not care to accept their Call, upon that footing, and wanted Security for quiet and peaceable Possession, a certain Term of Years: But these Gentlemen, it is like, did not see the Inconsistency of *this* with the avowed Principle of the Separation, that the People have a Right, of which they cannot be deprived, both to chuse, and *dismiss* their Ministers, at pleasure. I should be also glad to be informed, how they reconcile this Principle with their Church Covenant. This Covenant, I thought, had obliged them, Minister and People, to walk together in all the special Ordinances of the Gospel, in such manner, as that it should be held, afterwards, unlawful for them to leave their Place, and forsake his Ministry, without being regularly dismissed by him. And, if so, what is become of their unalienable Right to *choose* and *dismiss* their Pastors? And yet, as inconsistent as these things seem to be, it is ten to one, but one of these covenanting Pastors, if he were writing a Book to set forth his *Plain Reasons for Dissenting from the Church of England, or counting up the Advantages you enjoy, above us, towards your better Edification, and greater Increase in Piety*; I say, it is a great chance, if he did not tell you of your being allowed to

to choose, and dismiss again, your Ministers, as one of the choicest of those Advantages, which you should bless yourselves, and be thankful to God for.

Your Author says, *You can dismiss your Ministers, if they be scandalously immoral.* And cannot we too? Is there no Way provided in the Church to get rid of *such*? And, till that is done, or if it be *never* done, cannot any Parishioner leave his Church, and go to another, which is, in effect, dismissing him? And, if this be done in a modest and peaceable manner, without Noise and Clamour, and a schismatical Spirit, no body is like to *blame* him much, or go about to *hinder* him. You can dismiss them too, *If they be known to fall into dangerous Errors, and will publish them, in opposition to the common Sentiments of the People.* That was *very prudently* put in: For what if the whole People are of the same Sentiments? What if he has corrupted them, or the *leading Men* among them, and has brought them over to his own wicked Errors? Will they dismiss him *then*? Or has any body else, by the Constitution of your Churches, Power and Authority to part them? If they *will* keep him, and *pay* him, pray, who can *hinder* it? Who can remove him, in spite of the People, and put a worthier in his Place, who will teach them the Truth, bring them back from their perverse and dangerous Wanderings, and put them in the right Way to Salvation? And, as to their dismissing him *for his being thought not so profitable to their Edification*, as they, I suppose, could wish, or as he formerly, perhaps, had been; it is a thing seldom heard of. If he be *Orthodox*, as they call Orthodoxy, and, withal, a *quiet and inoffensive* Man, they commonly jog on together for Life, though he be thought to grow a little *dull*, and *less edifying*,

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every day. - Good-nature, Friendship, a Regard to his Family, and other Considerations of the like sort do, generally, keep them from dismissing him. But what if it happens, that the Congregation is *divided* about *keeping* or *dismissing* him; that the *ruling Part* think *well* of his publick Ministrations, and are for *keeping* him, while the *great Majority*, all of the meaner sort, think otherwise of them, and would have him be dismissed, which, if we consider the various Tastes and Humours of Men, is like to be frequently the Case? If these should think of setting up for themselves, and choosing one who is more to their liking, they would be thought to *walk disorderly*, and be infallibly charged with the heinous Sin of making Schisms and Divisions in the Church; of which we have known divers Instances; one, particularly, at *Exeter*, in the Case of the late Mr. *Peirce*. And if, notwithstanding *that*, they should be still of the mind to do it, they might not have Ability to provide him a sufficient Maintenance. Content, therefore, they *must* be, and cannot help themselves, as the Members of the Church, in that Case, easily may. If they fancy *not* the Preaching of their Parish Minister, there are, in most Places, many conformable Clergymen, whom they may like better, very near. And, though running from their own to other Parishes, under Pretence of better Instruction, is not a thing one can *approve* of, or would *encourage*, yet it is commonly *indulged*; and if any one *will* take the Liberty to do it, he *may*, and we cannot help it: Whereas a Dissenter, here in the Country, if he likes not his own Pastor, has commonly no other, at least of the same Denomination, whom he can constantly hear, and join himself to, without intolerable Inconvenience. And as to many, who have neither the Ability, nor the Convenience for travelling ma-
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ny Miles, on the Lord's Day, the thing is quite impracticable.

That we may not be always upon the *Defensive*, I must desire leave to observe, that your Ministers, by being so much, as to their Maintenance and Dismission, in the Power of the People, are under Temptations often, it is to be feared, too strong to let them go on, without Reproof, in wrong and perverse Ways, to indulge them in their Errors, and flatter them in their Vices. In this respect, it will be granted, I hope, the *Advantage* is fairly on *our* Side.

After your Author had said what he thought proper about the Privilege of choosing your own Ministers, he takes Occasion to display, as the great Advantage of that Privilege, the Excellencies of their Preaching, by marking it with three or four Characters, which he seems to think very *distinguishing* ones, and, in a manner, *peculiar* to Dissenters.

They frequently insist upon the peculiar Themes of Christianity, and Divine Revelation. As if no body else did so! when it is notorious, this is what the Bishops earnestly recommend to their Clergy, and what they, generally, practise, not only in compliance with their Lordships Directions, but from their own Judgments, as a thing fit in itself, and highly necessary in these Times.

The peculiar Themes of Christianity and divine Revelation are the following, at least, the following are some of them; the Doctrine of Original Sin, or the dismal Consequences of the Fall of *Adam* upon his Posterity, the Necessity of a Redeemer, the miraculous Conception and wonderful Birth of our Redeemer, his admirable Life, his amazing Miracles, his Death and Passion, and Satisfaction thereby, his Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven,
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and sitting there at the Right-hand of God, to make Intercession for us, the Dignity and Excellency, the End and Design of all his Offices, and the Benefits we receive therefrom, Salvation through him alone, his sending the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost on his Apostles, the Inspiration and Perfection of the Holy Scriptures, the Doctrine of the Trinity, or the Divinity of the Son and Holy Ghost, the Reality and Necessity of divine Assistances, the Nature, the Unity, and the Perpetuity of the Catholic Church, and the Communion of Saints in it; the Nature and Duty of Faith, and the Privileges of the Faithful; the Nature and End of the Two Sacraments, and the Duty of observing them; the Doctrine of Repentance and Forgiveness of Sins; and, in regard to the Things appertaining to the next Life, which have been brought to light through the Gospel, the Resurrection of the Body, the Coming of our Lord *Jesus Christ* to Judgment, and the Life everlasting. These, I think, are the chief of those Doctrines that are more eminently Christian; but, upon what Grounds any Gentleman can pretend to say, or insinuate, that the Preaching of *these* is the Character, in any peculiar Degree, of your Ministers, I can't readily conceive. A Difference between *our* Preaching and *yours*, in regard to *these* Doctrines, if it lies only in some smaller Degree of more or less, cannot be easily discerned; and if it could, it would not be a sufficient Ground for such a distinguished Preference of your Preaching as is here intimated to be due to it. Nothing but a *general* and *notorious* Neglect on our Side, can justify such a Preference. And how does it appear there is such a Neglect on our Side? No one, I suppose, has taken the Trouble to get Intelligence or Information of what is preached, on any one Sunday in the Year, in all our Churches and Meetings.

ings. And if any Judgment were to be made of *this*, by the Sermons we have in Print, we should be very willing to abide by it. For my own Part, I can see no Reason for your Preachers assuming to themselves this Character, as peculiarly belonging to *them*, though I have carefully read *many* of their Sermons, and lightly skimm'd over *more*. I am sure, of those that have been published by our Divines, there is scarcely a Volume, wherein divers of *the peculiar Themes of Christianity* before-mentioned are not only *touch'd* upon, but *professedly* handled. And one Way how it comes to be so is *this*. The *Fasts* and *Festivals* of the Church lead *our* Clergy, and, indeed, lay them under a Kind of Necessity of Preaching upon the great Articles and Mysteries of our holy Religion, once a Year. But those solemn Seasons being quite disregarded in *your* Churches, *your* Ministers are neither *obliged* nor *led* to discourse upon, and, for what I know, may think it improper, offensive, and scandalous to meddle with *those* Subjects at *such* Times, as it would have an Appearance of *observing Days, and Months, and Times, and Years*, against the Principles and Custom of your Churches; and hold it best to let them alone till some *other* Time, which, as is usual in such Cases, may happen to be *no* Time. And if those Mysteries are treated of, at any time, in *your* Sermons, yet as *your* Ministers are never led by any *particular Call*, or *special Occasion*, to those Subjects, it is most like to be done only incidentally, in a slight and superficial Manner. And I cannot but esteem it one considerable Benefit and Advantage, among divers others, of our keeping the *Fests* and *Fasts* of the Church, which you have discarded, that *our* People are hereby secured of having the grand Mysteries of our holy Faith more largely

largely explained, more solidly proved, more frequently inculcated and enforced upon them.

But they not only instruct the Head, they strike the Heart in a powerful and affecting manner. We have no Exception, I assure him, to this Way of Preaching; but when the Preacher has thoroughly convinced the Reason, and captivated the Judgments of his Audience, by clear Evidence and Demonstration of the Truth and Weight of what he delivers, we would have him go on to move and warm their Affections. But as the former Character of Preaching is certainly the more excellent of the two, and that wherein a Deficiency can least be dispensed with, so that, I believe, will be allowed by all competent and impartial Judges, to be more peculiarly and eminently the Character of our Preachers, than the other is of yours. The Generality of both one and t^other have not, I fear, all the Talents (for they are many) that are requisite to strike the Heart in the most powerful Manner, and in any degree of Perfection. The Passions and Affections (this Writer knows) are tender and touchy things, and must be approached with all the Address and Delicacy imaginable. You may possibly move the grosser Part of an Audience by an affected Tone, loud Vociferations, violent Agitations of the Body, and by bursting out upon them in a Torrent of Exclamation, though ever so improper and unseasonable. But in others, a little more refined, you will raise no Passion besides Indignation and Disdain, to see your Vanity and Folly, in going about to make yourself Master of their Passions by such ridiculous Ways.

Again, *It is the Excellency of their Ministry, that it leads People to a Sense of their Degeneracy and Ruin by the Fall of Adam; that it teaches them more*
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the Weakness and Impotence of Nature, and the Necessity of Divine Grace. The Doctrine of the Corruption of Nature by the Fall, and the Necessity of the Grace of God, is as much the Doctrine of the Church, and her Clergy, as of Dissenters. And this our Author knows to be so. So that, it is like, he means, they carry them *not so far* as Dissenters do; which may be, generally, true, and they never the worse Guides for that. For he is not, on course, the best, who lays human Nature lowest: There is Danger in *depressing* it too low, as well as in *exalting* it too high. And it will be found, upon thorough Examination, that the established Clergy have well avoided *both* Extremes, and taught the *Necessity of God's Grace*, upon the firmest and soundest Principles.

But *experimental Preaching*, I perceive, is their top Excellence. ^b This he describes by *preaching upon spiritual and inward Subjects, such as the first Awakenings of the Conscience of a Sinner, the Fears of the Wrath of God, which sometimes accompany such Awakenings, the Temptations diverting the Mind from them, the Conflicts of the Spirit in these Seasons, the Cases of the Afflicted, and the Tempted, of those that grow in the things of God, and those that backslide, and decline from those degrees of Piety which they once professed and practised, the false Peace of Presumption, and the Torments of Despair, the Terrors of a wounded, with the Serenities and Consolations of an assured Conscience, the Workings of in-dwelling Sin, the manifold Disguises which it conceals itself under, and the subtle Excuses framed by the Flesh for the Indulgence of it, the way and manner of Regeneration, or new Birth.* It no way appears, that they preach *more* upon these Subjects than we do. And this Author *himself*, in the midst

^b *Humble Attempt*, p. 44. 171.

of all his glorying in this their way of experimental Preaching, cannot help discovering some Consciousness of their want of it. It was (he says) *the Fashion and Practice of their Fathers among the Puritans, and hopes it is the present Mode of preaching among them*; but does not venture to affirm it to be so. And indeed how could he, when he knew, and, in another place, had plainly confessed the contrary. In his Dedication of one Volume of his Sermons on various Subjects, chiefly the inward and spiritual Parts of Godliness, he observes, that Treatises on these Subjects are seldom published now-a-days, and therefore he suffered them to take up a larger Share in those Discourses; and he did it with Design to rescue those Arguments from the Charge of Enthusiasm, and to put them in such a Light, as might shew their perfect Consistence with common Sense and Reason. Afterwards, he observes, agreeably to what I had just now quoted from him, out of the Book we are at present considering, that *their Fathers, indeed, talked much of pious Experience, and have left their Writings of the same Strain behind them*; but, he adds, that he mourned to think that some are grown so degenerate in our Days, as to join their Names, and their Works together, in a common Jest, and to ridicule the sacred Matter of their Sermons. He must mean the present Dissenters, or the Opposition between them and their Fathers is destroyed. So that, you see, he talks in another Strain of their Preaching and Writing, when another Nail was to be driven.

But, it may be, though they enter not more into these Subjects, they may be better qualified, by their larger Experiences, to enter into them, when they do. I answer: Were they so well qualified for it, they would hardly ridicule it, as this Author complains they do. And, which way they should come

to be *qualified* for it so much better, and have *larger Experiences* in these Cases than other Folks, I cannot imagine. They have not been observed, that I know of, to be *more* tempted, *more* afflicted, *more* in Circumstances of Despair or Presumption, and so forth, than other Men. Of that there is not the least Appearance. And if any have been, or be now, in *some* of the Circumstances above described, they cannot well be in *many*, they cannot possibly be in *all*, or *near* all. For a good Part of these Cases are diametrically *opposite* to one another. Mr. *Whitfield*, indeed, assures us, *He has undergone a Series of Temptations, and continual Buffetings of the Devil, which have, in a high Degree, qualified him for the Ministerial Office, in that he has experimentally tried all things, and having suffered every sort of Temptation, can suit his Advice to the different States and Conditions of other People's Souls.* He belike, young as he is, never preached any thing but what he has experimentally felt himself. But I have not heard that dissenting Ministers pretend, yet, to any such thing.—After all, I must do this Author the Justice to own, he does not directly, and in Terms, say, *this is*, but only talks of it *as if it was* the general Mode of their Preaching. *You expect, you love, you delight,* (says he to the People) *in such sort of Preaching.* That they may do, and yet not *have* it. Yes, perhaps, you will say, if they *like* it, they shall *have* it, because their Preachers are of their own *choosing*. Sir, it does not follow; for, possibly, your Elections of Ministers (like other Elections) may often be carried by Management and Intrigue, or swayed by *Interest*, by special *Friendships*, by *Relation* and *Alliance*, and other Considerations of a like Nature. And if some of your largest and richest Congregations have it in their Power to have such as they *like*, such as they

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think the *best* and *ablest* among your Ministers, the rest will be obliged to choose such as *offer themselves*, or such as they can *persuade* to accept their Call, and come and help them, whether they preach thus *christianly*, thus *pathetically*, thus *experimentally*, or not.

He says, *greater Care is taken among you about the Admission to the Lord's Table, and excluding the Vicious from it.* He confesses, that, by the Rules of the Church, scandalous Sinners are not allowed to come to it: Only he says, *These Rules are not observed, and put in Practice, in all Places, as they ought to be.* Well, be it so, that some notorious Offenders, *Schismatics*, for instance, who ought, by the Canons of the Church, to be rejected, have been, sometimes, admitted to Communion: Is it not true too, that some (and that by the Rules of your Churches, or however by the avowed Principles of your Ministers) are, among *you*, excluded, who ought to have been admitted to it. It is, generally, held among *you*, that the Sacrament is for none but perfect and consummate Christians, such as can give a particular Account of their Conversion, and of the Work of Grace upon their Souls: by which means, not only open and scandalous Offenders, but many who are not wicked, yet in a State of a spiritual Weakness and Imperfection, are kept off from an Ordinance, which would be the Food and Nourishment, the strengthening and refreshing of their Souls.

Lastly, it is numbered among your Advantages, that *your whole Conduct is strictly observed, and your Behaviour watched with a narrow and severe Eye, by many of your Neighbours of the established Church, and especially* (he says) *by those that hate you.* But this Advantage is not peculiar to Dissenters. Whatever it is, Churchmen enjoy it as well as you; for
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their Conduct and Behaviour is also observed, and severely watched by their dissenting Neighbours, especially *those that hate them*. They cannot, he says, *step awry, but Censure and Reproach attend them*. And if they are guilty of any heinous Crime and Scandal, the whole Profession and Party of Dissenters are loaded with it, a Circumstance no way pleasing, however a profitable one, as it is a Spur to Duty, a Guard and Restraint upon their whole Behaviour. Possibly, it may be so, when any eminent Dissenter, who makes a Profession of *Strictness* in Religion, does things that are much amiss. And so, I can assure him, if any eminently *strict* and *zealous* Churchman does the same, the Church shall be loaded with his Crime, and it will be said, and often has been, on that Occasion, *These are the Friends, these are the Ornaments of the Church of England!* and may it not, then, be supposed, this will be a Spur to, a Guard, and Restraint upon *them*? But as to the common Herd, on one side or the other, I don't see but they may do as they please, without any mighty Matter being made of it, or much said against their respective Churches. And, if it were otherwise, it is not likely, that Consideration would have any weight with *them*, or be any Check to *their* Appetites. It will be a Check to none, besides eminent Professors; and it will be an *equal* Check to those, of both sides. And, indeed, I am somewhat of Opinion, our unhappy Dissentions have made both *them* and *us* a little more circumspect in our Conduct than we might otherwise have been. This Advantage, I am ready to think, we *do* reap from our religious Dissentions. An Advantage however dearly bought, at the Expence of Truth, and Peace, and Charity, the Welfare of our Country, and the Honour of our common Christianity.

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And now, Sir, I take my leave of your Author's Reasonings about the *special Obligations* you are supposed to lie under, and the *superior Advantages* you are pretended to enjoy above *us* of the established Church, towards your Increase in Piety, and speeding your Way to Heaven.—If it be thought, as very probably it may, (and, truly, I begin to flatter myself, it appears, by this time, Sir, to *you*) that this Author is a little too *visionary*, in reckoning such things for *mighty Advantages*, which no Mortal besides can see to be *any at all*, and that he has not argued upon these Heads, as one would have expected a Writer who so well understands, as he certainly does, the *right Use of Reason*, should do; it ought to be remembred, this is no more than what happened to the famous *Grotius*, to *Sir Thomas More*, and happens every Day to the greatest Men, when they take upon them to defend any favourite Notion, or inveterate Prejudice they have been bred up in, or have, afterwards, unwarily entertained. On such Occasions, they often fall infinitely beneath themselves, and write in a Manner that discredits the great Abilities God has given them. Many excellent Talents this Writer is certainly possessed of; and it is much to be wished, he had wholly employed them on other Subjects, on which he could not have failed both to *please* and *profit* us.

Having now given you my Thoughts concerning those *special Advantages* which you suppose yourselves to enjoy above *us*, in order to a good and holy Life, and shewn, that you really have no Advantage in any of those Particulars, and that, in some of them, the Advantage is evidently and greatly on our side; let me entreat you, Sir, in my turn, to consider some things I shall take
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the liberty to suggest to you, which I humbly apprehend to *be* great Advantages peculiar to *us*, and almost, if not entirely, wanting in your Churches.

You need not be told, Sir, (I dare say) that Christian Faith is the only true Foundation of Christian Holiness. Now, in our Church, we have some Provision, and that one of the most effectual, both for the *teaching* and *preserving* the Christian Faith entire and uncorrupt, which is not in yours; I mean the Use of the Three Creeds in in the public Worship. By this means the great and capital Points of Belief are rendered familiar to our People, and they come to have in their Minds a regular Scheme of it. And if *you* are taught, now and then, some of these Articles, from the Pulpit, I fear there are others, which you hear little or nothing of. Nor is it only a proper means to make them readily remember, and easily understand their Faith, but also a powerful means to keep them in it, in opposition to Heresies and false Doctrines that corrupt it. For, surely, they will be the more confirmed in it by seeing the whole Church, many of them better instructed, and more knowing than themselves, concurring in the open Profession of it. And if any have unhappily swerved from it, they are hereby distinguished, and made manifest, especially if they be Ministers, who cannot rehearse the Creeds, if they do not believe *every* Article thereof. So that if one of these happens to be heretical, or is fallen into any Error contrary to the Faith, he must quit his Station in the Church to one who is sounder in it, or else expose himself, by an open and odious Prevarication, to such Abhorrence in the Hearts of all Men, as will keep him from being able to spread much Infection among others. I own,
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your Ministers do subscribe to all the Creeds, in subscribing to the Articles, and (what I would more particularly point out to your Observation) the *Atanasian* Creed, as well as the other; which let them reconcile, as they can, with those *free Censures* some of them pass upon it. However, we find, in fact, by some few Instances in our own Church, that *subscribing in private* is one thing, and *rebearfing them publickly*, before the Church, is another; those who can do, without any difficulty, the former, strangely boggling at the latter. And, I am ready to think, that, if the open Confession of your Faith, in the Words of these Creeds, had been as much a necessary Part of your Worship as it is of ours, the Doctrine of *Arius* would not have been so rife among your *London* Ministers, and many too in the Country, as it appeared, some Years ago, to be. And, therefore, I hope, these Formularies of our Faith will never be detached from our Liturgy, how long and loud soever Heretics or Latitudinarians call for it.

I desire, Sir, to be excused while I relate to you, out of my Lord *Clarendon*, a pleasant Accident relating to this Subject, which fell out at the Treaty of *Uxbridge*. The Commissioners being all together at the Fire-side, entertaining themselves with general and casual Discourse, one of the King's Commissioners asked one of the other side, with whom he had Familiarity, in a low Voice, *Why there was not, in their whole Directory, any mention at all of the Creed, or the Ten Commandments, and so little of the Lord's Prayer.* Which my good Lord of *Pembroke* over-hearing, he answered aloud, that *he and many others were very sorry they had been left out, that the putting them in had taken up many Hours Debate in the House of Commons, and that at last the*
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caving them out had been carried by eight or nine Voices; and so, they did not think fit to insist upon the Addition of them in the House of Peers; but many were afterwards troubled at it; and he verily believed, if it were to do again, they should carry it for inserting them all. Which made many smile (as well it might) to hear that the Creed and Ten Commandments had been put to the Question, and rejected. And there is little doubt, but the throwing out the Creeds from the publick Worship was one Inlet to those monstrous and execrable Heresies, which, at that time, grew up among us, as the removal of the Episcopal Government was certainly another. And it is not unlikely that Cromwell himself had something of this in his Thoughts, when he would often say, *That there was much of Good in the Order of Bishops, if the Dross were but scowered off.*

From these means for preserving *the Purity of the Faith* pass we on to others for promoting *Holiness of Life*. I scorn, Sir, to name the Cross at Baptism, or any human Ceremony in our Church; though I think too, I have as much Reason to make that a *Promoter*, as your Author has to make it a *Hinderer* of Holiness. And yet, I must say, when it is used at the Baptism of an adult Person, I cannot see why it may not be supposed to make some Impression upon his Mind, to stir it up to certain holy Purposes and Resolutions; as, particularly, a Resolution not to be *ashamed to profess the Faith of Christ crucified*.—In the primitive Church, Sir, it was a common Case, that newly baptized Persons were hurried immediately to their Martyrdoms. Now, is it not reasonable to think, that the *Lord's Signet* (as it was then called) which they had just before demanded, and devoutly received upon their Foreheads, might have some Influence upon them, to

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make them *ashamed* of falling away from the Faith of *Christ*, to *strengthen* them (I mean, Sir, in a natural Way) against their approaching Sufferings, to make them *valiant for the Truth*, and *faithful unto Death*? As our Minds and Affections, in this present State, are apt to be strongly impressed and influenced by the Power of Sense and Imagination, such an affecting Ceremony, at such a time, might have, perhaps, a greater Effect than a serious Exhortation.—But of these Matters you may think as you please; for I lay no mighty stress upon them.

I lay a much greater stress upon another Appointment of the Church, relating to Baptism; and that is, the Use of Godfathers and Godmothers. I had before occasion to vindicate this Institution from the Charge, or rather the *Suspicion* or *Imagination*, of an evil Tendency and Effect: And now I shall shew it to be a *wise*, an *useful*, and *necessary* Institution. And though your Author has been pleased not only to slight it, *as not needful*, but to condemn it, *as not proper*; some of the hottest Advocates for the Dissenting Cause, and most given to libel, overlash, and run riot in opposition to the Church, have owned it to be not only *useful*, but, in many Cases, *necessary*. ^a Mr. Pierce himself, amidst all his Misrepresentations of our Sense and Practice in this Particular, confesses it to be so. *It is not*, (says he) *any matter of Controversy between us, Whether it be lawful and useful, that, when Infants are baptized, some honest pious Persons should make a publick Profession of the Christian Faith in the Assembly, and promise to take care (if God spares them) that the Child, as soon as he becomes capable, should be trained up in the Christian Faith and Practice. Nor do we dispute whether any, besides the Parents, may be allowed to perform this Office. We acknowledge there is a Ne-*
cessity

^a *Vindic. of Dissenters*, Part III. Ch. 6.

cessity they should, in some Cases; as, if the Parents are dead; or, by reason of their great distance, cannot be present at the baptizing their Children; or, if they are so ignorant in the Christian Religion, or so heretical in their Opinions, and vicious in their Lives, that their Promise cannot be looked upon as fit to be taken by the Church.—Now, Sir, if it be necessary in so many Cases, I would beg leave to observe three things; *the first*, that our Church has done wisely in requiring it in *all* Cases, that the Clergy may not be obliged to be always making odious Distinctions (which sometimes, perhaps, would be groundless and arbitrary too) among their Parishioners, by requiring Sponsors for the Children of *some*, and not of *others*, which would have been a Source of endless Heats and Animosities between them. *The second* is, that Mr. Peirce, and such of his Brethren as are of his Mind, are much to blame for not introducing into their Churches the Use of Sponsors, at least in those Cases wherein they allow it to be necessary. And the other thing I would observe, most to my present Purpose, is, that, since they have not done it, we have, in *our* Church, this Advantage towards the bringing up of Children in the Fear of God, and the Faith of the Gospel, which is not in *yours*.

I hope, Sir, you will not offer to argue with me (as Gentlemen of your Persuasion commonly do) against the Institution of Godfathers and Godmothers, from the little Thought and Care they are often seen to take in discharging the Obligations they are under. For, if you do, I shall be obliged to reply, it is nothing to the purpose; because our present Enquiry is, Whether the Church does not afford its Members some great and special Advantages towards growing in Grace and Goodness, above what are to be found among you; not, whether all its Members

do *their* Duties, and make a right Use of those Advantages it affords them. And yet, if you insist upon it, we are ready to join Issue with you, even upon that footing. We will not deny, but the greatest part of those who undertake this Office do not discharge it so conscientiously as they ought, (as Parents themselves often do not) and heartily wish ^a some things were either removed or regulated, whereby that, in part, is occasioned. But then, Sir, there *are* some, who *do* make a Conscience of doing their Duties in it: And it is worth while to keep up the Institution for *their* Sakes. And, as far as *their* honest and faithful Discharge of *their* Duty goes, so far the Church actually receives Benefit, of which, you know, there is nothing in *your* Churches. The late Dr. *Bray* was a very observing Man, and watchful Pastor; and he assures us, *He has known, himself, many Instances of Persons, who owe that Understanding they have of Religion, and the Fear of God, purely, next under God, to the Care of their Godfathers and Godmothers.* I believe him: For I can myself name others, who have been more mindful of the pious Education of the Children they were Sureties for, than their Parents were, and, particularly, have procured for them the religious Education of our Charity Schools, which

^a Such, for example, as the high Fees given to Nurses, Midwives, and Servants. These have been the Occasion of much Perplexity and Trouble to many Parents, who have not known how to ask their Friends to do an Office so expensive to them. And this Perplexity of the Parents has not only grown into a sort of Disaffection to the very Institution, but has often obliged them to pass over their more serious Friends and Relations, who could not conveniently, (they thought) or would not care to part with the Sums expected, and to take up with others, loose and disorderly Persons, who would more readily, or could better do it; whereby the Office has been exposed to Contempt and Ridicule, and the End of it, in those Instances, quite defeated.

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their Parents took no Care to do. And, I suppose, there are few who make any Observations of this nature, but can point out to you other Instances of the like kind.

The next Administration in our Church is Confirmation. This, you know, you have wholly discarded. And, surely, you will be obliged to acknowledge, you have lost thereby a very great Advantage: For, when it is received after due Preparation, and with the requisite Qualifications and Dispositions, it cannot but greatly conduce to future Holiness of Life. Many Protestant Churches, besides our own, have this Opinion of it, and do, accordingly retain it. The Judgment of *Calvin*, that it is an *Apostolical Institution*, is well known; as is also his Wish, that it were every where restored. And I can tell you of one (in his day one of the greatest Oracles of your Party^a) who declared his thorough Approbation of it, and, in the late times, called loudly for its Restoration, and said, *The Directory, without it, was more imperfect than the Common-Prayer*. The late Dr. *Calamy* too was in the same Sentiments touching this Matter. ^b *It would be* (says he) *very becoming and advantageous, did Persons every where, before they first communicated, freely profess their Sincerity and Constancy in their Baptismal Covenant or Vow, and openly declare themselves, in the Face of a Christian Congregation, Enemies to the Devil, the World, and the Flesh. And this is the most considerable Part of that which has been wont to be called Confirmation; a Thing much practised and insisted upon in the Primitive Church, though of later Times much neglected, and by some laid aside, as useless; the more's the Pity.*

^a Mr. Baxter.

^b *Practical Discourse concerning Vows*, p. 87.

And, surely, Confirmation, if not absolutely necessary, is yet very requisite in any Church which practises Infant Baptism. We are used to be pressed, by the Antipædobaptists, with the Conveniency and Usefulness of deferring Baptism, till People arrive at Years of Discretion, when they may, upon mature Judgment and deliberate Choice, consent to, and take upon themselves the Covenant of God in it. And how do we answer them? Not by saying, there is no need, no use and benefit of so doing; but by telling them, we do it in Confirmation. How you answer them I know not. Indeed, Dr. Calamy does inform us, that ^a *Conversation with the Pastor of each Christian Society, is expected before any one's first communicating, that Satisfaction may be given; that such as come to partake of the holy Eucharist, do understand the Nature of their Baptismal Obligation, and are willing to stand to it.* But what is this to those who dare not offer themselves to the Sacrament, or are not admitted to it? And as to those who are, is such a private Transaction, between them, and their Minister, to be held enough? No, by no means; and Dr. Calamy himself not only confesses, but contends, it is not enough. ^b *The publick Transaction of this Matter he thinks much more eligible; and observes to that Purpose, that many Instances may be produced, where very near as much depends upon the Manner of doing a Thing, as on the Thing itself, and this he takes to be one. And if it would not be (he says) too great a Digression, he could make it appear, that the Scripture favours such a public Recognition of the Baptismal Vow, and that 'tis agreeable to the Practice of the Church in several successive Ages.* And I can't help further

^a *Account of Protestant Dissenters*, p. 47.

^b *Practical Discourse concerning Vows*, p. 89.

observing,

observing, by the bye, that he plainly approves *Imposition of Hands, joined with serious Prayers to God for the strengthening and confirming Grace of his Spirit, for those who come to own their Baptismal Vow, openly, in the Face of a Christian Congregation, and an authoritative Benediction on the Part of the Minister, as God's Officer.* I will own to you, we are bound to perform the Baptismal Covenant, whether we renew and take it solemnly upon ourselves, or not. But, surely, you cannot think, that the open and solemn Renewal of it, before God and many Witnesses, according to the manner of our Church, is a needless, or useless thing, and has no Fitness to awaken and engage Men to the better Performance of it. Let it be supposed, there are *some* who come to Confirmation more for *Form and Custom*, than any thing else, and are neither better nor worse for it. That is their own Fault; and they may come, upon no higher Principles and Motives, to Baptism, or the Lord's Supper, and be just as much benefited by those Ordinances. But, then, there are many others, who come to it prepared and qualified as the Church would have them, and as they ought to be. And are not these like to be better for it? Does not God give his holy Spirit to them that ask it? And if ever the Unction of the Holy Spirit can be expected, as the Return of Prayer, surely it must be, when the chief Pastor and his Flock assemble together on purpose to implore it, and when those on whose behalf they implore it are qualified to receive it, when, after a thorough Instruction in the Nature of their Baptismal Covenant, and their Obligations to perform their Part of it, they appear, upon mature Deliberation and free Choice, in the Presence of God, and the Face of his Church, to own and renew, and are sincerely resolved, with the Help of God's Grace, to perform it.

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it. And if you can shew, there is nothing in all this that is *engaging*, nothing that is like to *bind* and *awe* the Conscience, nothing fit to make them more virtuous and religious, and to help them forward in the right Way that leads to everlasting Life, I will never talk more of the Fitness of any thing for any thing, as long as I live.

We have, Sir, another powerful Means for the promoting of Virtue, and furtherance of Holiness, which seems little minded in your Churches; and that is *Fasting*. I don't mean fasting on rare and special Occasions, on account of national Calamity, or Guilt; but fasting frequently, and in a regular Course, for mortifying the Body, and subduing or weakening the Principles of Sin, the *Lusts that war in our Members*. No body can doubt of this being a Duty. Perhaps, Nature itself teaches it; for we see it practised by some Heathens, as well as Jews and Christians. On which account, we may the less wonder, if it be true, that there is not to be found, in the New Testament, any positive Injunction of it. I say, if it *be* true; because the Words of our Lord concerning his Followers and Disciples, when he should be taken from them, *and then shall they fast*, are understood by some in a *preceptive* Sense. Let that be as it will; the Duty is sufficiently established by his prescribing *Rules*, and giving *Cautions* about it, and proposing everlasting Rewards to the right Performance of it, as you will find he does, *Mat. ix. 16, 17, 18*; and by the Practice of his immediate Disciples, and particularly *St. Paul*, who speaks of his *Fastings often*, and *keeping under his Body, lest, when he had preached to others, he himself should be a Cast-away*. By this Instance we may see, that the Discipline of Fasting is requisite even for those, for many of those, to be sure it is, who are yet temperate in their whole

whole Course of Life. How much more, then, for others, who live in Pleasure and Indulgence, in order to correct the Rankness, and reduce the Redundancy of their Spirits, whereby they are filled with worldly and carnal Affections, and pushed violently on to many things which *drown them in Destruction and Perdition*? Therefore the Church rightly prays, *We may have Grace to use such Abstinence, that the Flesh may be subdued to the Spirit.* Nor does she only pray for the Grace, but teaches the Duty in her Homilies, and in the Sermons and Exhortations of her Clergy; and has appointed proper Seasons for the Exercise thereof, one solemn annual Fast; others at proper distances, and one Day in most Weeks of the Year as you may see in the Rules and Tables prefixed to the Book of Common-Prayer.

As to our *Practice* in the Matter of Fasting, be pleased to take notice, *that* is not the Subject of our present Enquiry or Debate. *That*, I will own to you, is not, generally, what it ought to be. I say generally, because the devoutest Members of our Church do yet make a Conscience of this Duty, and exercise themselves continually in the Practice of it. However, you see, Sir, here, the watchful Care of our Church, that this important Duty be not overlooked or neglected. And, unless you can shew the like Care is taken of it among *you*, confess the Advantages you lose by being divided from it. If I am not mightily deceived, you will be found to have reformed in this, just as you have done in many other Instances; that is, thrown away the thing, out of dislike to the *false* or *nugatory* manner in which it was observed in the Papacy. I don't remember that any notice is taken of it in those Formularies which are regarded among you, as containing your Faith and Practice; nor have I yet

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met with any Sermons, or other Treatises of your Ministers, shewing the Obligation, and pressing the Practice of it upon their People; nor have I heard of its being practised even by the strictest and devoutest among you. If these things be otherwise than they appear to me, and I am really mistaken, *here, Sir, I am*, ready to retract my Mistake, being desirous in *this*, as in *all* other things, to be set right.

I also humbly apprehend, that as these are proper means to *promote* Virtue and Holiness, so Virtue and Holiness are *taught* in a better Manner in our Church. As your Author observes, that *different Parties of Christians have their peculiar Ways in Preaching, and the present Conformists and Non-conformists have their different Manners, as well in composing, as delivering their Sermons*, so their different Manners are to be plainly seen in this, that the former preach up more the *Duties*, the latter more the *Privileges* of the Saints, holding in Contempt the preaching of Duties, under the low and degrading Character (as they, at least, mean it) of preaching up Morality, or good Works. Nobody doubts, but preaching the Privileges of Believers is, or may be, being properly managed, very useful. Our very Catechism begins with teaching our Children their Privileges, as visible baptised Christians; and we may properly say of these two what our Lord said concerning the Tythe of *Mint, and Anise, and Cummin*, on the one hand, and *Judgment, Mercy, and Faith*, on the other, *These ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone*. However, of the two, your neglect of preaching the *Duties* is more evident, as it is, in itself, more *inexcusable*, and of *worse Consequence*, than ours of preaching the *Privileges* of the Faithful. And what but a Consciousness of his

his Brethren's neglect of, and of their, or, at least, their People's averfeness to this fort of preaching, led Dr. *Watts* to attempt to explain, in two Volumes of Sermons, many of the Duties of the Christian Life, that refer to our fellow Creatures, and to bespeak a favourable Reception to them in such Words as these? ^a *I hope no Man who loves the Gospel of Christ will knit his Brows at the Title Page, or throw Disgrace upon the Book with a contempt of dull Morality. If such a Person would give himself leave to peruse these Sermons, perhaps he would meet with so much of Christ and the Gospel in them, that he might learn to love his Saviour better than ever he did, and find how necessary moral Duties are to make his own Religion either Safe or Honourable. While we are saved (continues he) by Faith of the Blood and Righteousness of the Son of God, we must remember also that 'tis such a Faith as works by Love; for Faith without Works is dead and useless to all Purposes of Hope and Salvation. The Works which the Doctor recommends, and we desire to be preached and inculcated, are not those they make such a stir with in the Church of Rome; not Penances, Pilgrimages, endowing of Monasteries, and enriching the Shrines of Saints; but the substantial good Works of Faith and Piety, Justice and Charity, of Temperance, Meekness, and Humility, and such other as God has commanded us to walk in. And I am free to leave it to any unprejudiced Man to judge, whether despising and neglecting, or being instant in the preaching of these truly good and essential Works of Religion, be the more likely Way to advance Virtue and holy Living.*

^a Preface to Vol. II.

I would also further observe, that the Church has no Doctrines whereby she *destroys* what she has *built*, none whereby a holy Life is either made *unnecessary*, or *discouraged*. She does not teach the absurd and dangerous Doctrines (give me leave to call them) of absolute Election and Reprobation, with the Points hanging thereupon, which were once the *Shibboleth* of your Party, and *even now* are taught, it is supposed, by the greatest Part of your Ministers. I say nothing of the Antinomian Doctrines. The rank Antinomianism of Dr. *Chrisp*, which once greatly prevailed in the Churches, is now, I will suppose, generally decried. And yet, let me tell you, there is reason to fear, there are those among you who have no Dislike to his Positions. And this, I cannot but suspect, is one Reason that such mighty Civilities are shewn, such Countenance and Encouragement given, by divers of your Ministers, to a *young, conceited, solifidian Enthusiast*, who has lately started up among us. It is well, Men do not *always* act according to their *Principles*, nor set their *Practices* by their *Opinions*. If they did, and the forementioned Doctrines were to spread, and generally prevail, there would be *little Virtue*, and *few good Works* in the World.

As it is not my Intention to exhaust the Subject, and to count up *all* the Advantages *we* enjoy, and *you* lose, by living out of Communion with the Church; so, I will put you in mind of *only one* more, and that is in regard to *Devotion*, in the limited Sense of the Word, as it signifies Prayer, particularly that which is public. In *our* Church, we have *better Provision*, and *more frequent Opportunities* afforded for it, than are to be had among *you*. Is it not true, Sir, that your Meeting-houses are shut up from one Lord's Day to another, unless
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it be here and there one, where there happens to be a Lecture on the Week Days? Whereas, in *our* Church, public Prayers are ordered to be read every Day; and if, in small Villages, where Families live dispersed, and there are few can afford time, or have inclination to attend them, the thing is generally impracticable, it is well known to be practised in all Cities, and most great Towns in the Kingdom; and, in *London*, you cannot but have heard, there are Opportunities for public Prayer, not only every Day, but every Hour of it. So that a Man, in the Hurry of great Business, if he can find half an Hour of leisure Time, (as he easily may, one Part of the Day or other, if he be so minded, and his Thoughts turn that way) may go into a Church, and say his Prayers, whereby his Business may be sanctified, and rendered more acceptable to God; and they who have more Leisure may do it oftener.

—It has been the Wish of some pious Men, that there were Protestant Foundations, where Men or Women devoutly disposed, and disengaged from the World, (without entangling themselves with any Vows) might live together in Society, and give themselves up to the Service of God. I shall not trouble you with my Thoughts, whether such Societies be desirable; but, really, I think they are not *much* wanted: For such Persons as have no attachment to the World, and are of devout Tempers, and would probably, embrace that sort of Life, have it now in their Power to live in a way that will fully answer all the religious Ends and Purposes thereof. In most Cities and great Towns, and especially in *London* (as I said before) they may live as retired, and say their Prayers as often as they please. In the midst of the Crowd, they may be, as if they were in the Desert, overlooking the World, and overlooked by it. They will not be confined
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there, as in such Societies, to one Set of Company, agreeable, or otherwise, just as it shall happen; but, if they chuse any, may have only those for their Companions and Familiars, who have the same spiritual Gust and Relish with themselves. And they may, now and then, launch out into, and mix with the World, whenever a Prospect opens, and Opportunity offers, of doing Good in it. Here they may dedicate any Portion of their Time to holy Meditation, and private Prayer, and as much of it as they please to public. And there is scarce a Day in the Week but they may hear the Word of God preached in one or other of our Churches, nor (in some Parishes, if I mistake not) any Lord's Day, or Holyday, but they may receive the Holy Sacrament upon it. *Here*, they may say their Prayers without Formality, and say them often, (because without Force and Compulsion) without Weariness, and may be Recluses without that Spleen, Melancholy, Envy, Pride, and those Bickerings, Factions, and Contentions, which are well known to prevail in the Cloisters, among the People who (in their way) have given themselves to God. Are not these, Sir, very powerful Means towards the Advancement of Devotion? And, if you cannot say you have any such, which way can you avoid owning, they are great Advantages on our Side, unless it should be by undervaluing and making Devotion a thing of no account.

After the Church has taken such good Care for the *Faith*, the *Practice*, and *Devotion* of its Members, it cannot but be a mighty Satisfaction to them, to see themselves, too, *on the safe Side*, in regard to two things, the Charge of Schism, and the Want of valid regular Administrations. There is a stale Jest that goes about, and some People have taken mightily to it, That Schism is only a *theological Scare-*

Scarecrow. A Jest—which has rendered their Minds perfectly impenetrable by all the Reasonings that can be offered, to shew them the Danger of it. I hope your Ministers never speak of it so slightly; if they do, I must take the Liberty to say, they cannot be sincere: For I have always observed, that when any Part of their Congregations is growing mutinous, and seems in a Disposition to divide itself from the rest, they never fail to ring in their Ears the Sinfulness of making a Schism in the Church, in order to deter them from their Purposes. Though, by the way, I think they are a little too rash in venturing the mention of Schism to them; for that may put them in mind of the Schism of the whole Congregation from the Church of *England*, and of their Duty to return to it. Believe me, Sir, at least believe the Scriptures, and the Voice of Catholic Antiquity, that the Charge of Schism, where it can fairly be fixed, is not to be slighted. The least Suspicion of it, a Man would think, should not a little discompose a *scrupulous*, or a *tender* Conscience. But how a Conscience in either of those States can digest a Schism which is so *manifest* and *causeless*, and, by consequence, so *unwarrantable* as the present, is past my Skill to find out.

I am aware, Sir, you are accustomed to call your Schism a *peaceable Separation*; and as the clapping a plausible Name upon an ill thing has, in all Cases, a strange Power to *change*, *correct*, and *meliorate* the Idea of it, of which I could soon give you twenty Instances; so, in the present Case, you can hardly conceive how a thing which you are used to call by so *good*, and so *soft* a Name, can be so very criminal. But I must own, Sir, my Inability to apprehend, with what Sense or Consistency those two Words can be put together. The very *Nature* and *Essence* of the *Substantive* excludes the *Epithet*
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you join to it: And if I was writing to a perverse Adversary, as I am to a Friend, I should be ready to call this same *peaceable Separation* of yours, a Piece of arrant Nonsense and Contradiction. Every causeless Separation, Sir, from the Church, is a Breach of that Peace and Unity that *ought* to be in it; and therefore, no such Separation *can* be peaceable.——Put the Case, that a Wife should take a fancy to live by herself, in some private Part of the House, forsaking as well the Bed as the Board of her Husband; and, by little Artifices and crafty Suggestions, endeavour to engage the Children and Servants of the Family in sidings against him. Would you call this a *peaceable Separation*? I am very certain you would *not*. No, Sir; the Peace of that Family is broken, though there should be neither fighting nor scolding; but all the Decencies of well-bred Hatred or Indifferency should be kept up. Or, if you think the Case of a Wife, separating herself from her Husband, after this manner, is not so like, I will put another. Suppose two or three of the Counties in *Great-Britain* or *Ireland*, should take a Disgust at *Monarchical* Government, and, throwing off their Allegiance to his Majesty, go about to form themselves into a Commonwealth: Would you allow *this* to be called a peaceable Separation? No more, I dare say, than the former. You are too good a Subject of the King to speak or to hear any Body else, with Patience, speak of it in that *soft* and *tender* manner; and would certainly pronounce it a *disloyal* and *rebellious* Proceeding, though it were ever so much their desire to do all *without Tumult*, with great Professions of Honour for the Person of his Majesty, and of mighty Good-will to the rest of their Fellow-subjects, who thought fit to continue firm in their Allegiance to him. And if *this* Separation would not be *peaceable* and innocent, how Sir,
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can yours be? The Catholic Church is *one outward and visible Society*, divinely instituted, and indeed the most admirable and glorious Society, that ever has been, or will be seen under Heaven; and (consequently) whenever a Breach is made in the Unity thereof, when Diffensions arise in it, especially, when they come to be consummated in opposite Communion, the Peace of the Church is evidently lost, though that of the State, possibly, may be preserved, and People may be kept from coming to Blows about it: Yet even that, you are not to be told, has sometimes happened.

The Case is yet worse, when you leave the Communion (as I think you do) of your lawful Bishops and Priests, duly ordained to their Office, to put yourselves under the Guidance and Administrations of others, not duly ordained to it. I pretend not to assert, that the Administrations of such, where no other can be had, are of no Effect; but am firmly persuaded that, in such Cases, Cases of real and unavoidable Necessity, God will confer upon Believers in a more compendious Way, all the Benefits of his saving Sacraments. And the same I am willing to believe, in regard to those who attend such Administrations through invincible Ignorance, and a natural Incapacity to judge of these Matters. But, as I am sure, the latter is far from being your Case, so you will not say, I presume, the former is. And therefore you cannot depend, at least, with so much Assurance as is requisite for the Peace and Acquiescence of your Mind, that such Ordinances will be blessed to you. But, to set things at the lowest, the Callings and Ordinations of your Ministers, and, by consequence, their Administrations, are, most certainly, irregular. And an unnecessary, whether it be a factious, or only a wanton Departure from Regularity, from the pri-

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mitive Rule and Order established in the Church, cannot, surely, be pleasing to God. How it is, Sir, with you I know not; but sure I am, were I of a Church which I beheld thus lying, and choosing to lie in these Irregularities and Defects, I should have no Peace till I was out of it, though the godliest People in the Nation, or those who are reputed such, were universally crowding into it.

And now, Sir, I have gone through the *special Obligations*, which your Author supposes *you* are under, to a more eminent Holiness of Life, with the *peculiar Advantages* you are *pretended* also to enjoy, and some of those many, which, I humbly apprehend, *we* in the Communion of the Church *do* enjoy above *you*, in order to it. Which of these, upon the Comparison, are the most solid Advantages, and of the most real Efficacy towards rendering Men holy, must be left to your serious Consideration.

But I shall hardly be thought to have finished the Task I undertook, without going a Step or two farther, without considering together the Lives of Conformists and Nonconformists, or, at least, seeing what may be reasonably said in abatement of *the Fact*, which you seem so firmly to believe, and so much to rejoice in, that the Members of Dissenting Churches do greatly excel the rest of the Nation in Purity and Sanctity of Life; and then, in disproof of the Conclusion you would draw from it, that your Way of Religion is, *therefore*, better, or that this Consideration may justly prejudice, if not determine the Choice of any Person in its Favour, or make him, if he was bred up in it, quite easy in the Profession of it. If there really be such a remarkable Superiority on your Side, I doubt, you will be still ready to suspect, there must be, somewhere or other, in your Churches, great Advantages

tages concerning the Things of Religion and Godliness, though you should find yourself obliged to give up those on which your Author has insisted, or to own those in our Church which I have insisted on. If there be no Superiority at all, or but little, or not greater than may be accounted^a for, by considering the particular Situation, and other Circumstances of Dissenters, there will be a Presumption, that you have no Advantages above *us*. Let us then see how the *Fact* stands.

When we were discoursing upon this Subject, you gave me, I think, a Hint; but, indeed, so distant a one, that I did not then think myself obliged to take any notice of it, concerning the Lives of Ministers, as well as the People, on both Sides: And, it may not, perhaps, be amiss to enter, *now*, a little, into some Considerations of that sort. A strict Comparison between them is not the thing I intend. Any such Comparison would not only be odious, but of dangerous Consequence, as it might lessen the Credit of them both, and, by natural Consequence, the Credit of Religion itself. It would be something like comparing *moral* with *positive* Duties, the *internal* with the *external* Evidences of Revealed Religion; the Advocates for one Side saying, inconsiderately, all they can to disparage the other, whilst the Infidel, laughing in his Sleeve, greedily picks up all that is said against *both*, to set them *both* at naught. You shall then see, I will not go about to raise the Characters of *ours*, by dishonouring and vilifying *your* Ministers, nor follow the Example which some of them have set me, who have published to the World, that ^a *a very great many Clergymen* (*some*, it seems, would not do, nor *many*, nor *a great many*, but it must be *a very great*

^a Peirce's *Vindic. of Dissenters*, Part I. p. 279.

many; which, one would think, can be meant for no fewer than a third or fourth Part of the Whole, so many, he says) *have little to distinguish them from Heathens, or to persuade a Belief of their Christianity; nay, that their Lives are worse than those of Pagans.* Notwithstanding the Character which this Gentleman is pleased to give of them, which very probably, one time or other, will have the Honour to be found among the Gleanings of some Infidel Writer; I will venture to say, they deserve a very different one, (nor do I mean or desire the Dissenting Ministers should be excluded from the Benefit of it) that they are, in general, the most *irreproachable, uncorrupt, and virtuous* Part of the Nation. I suppose, you will say, *So they ought to be*; and you will say true. Nor shall I say false, when I say, *So they are.* They are still, Sir, let their Enviars and Maligners say what they will, *the Salt of the Earth*; and though they have lost something of their primitive Savour (as, in length of time, all things do) the World, if it were not for them, would quickly grow so corrupt, there would be no enduring, or living in it. Take, Sir, if you please, any corporate Body, Trade, Profession, or Order of Men, of any Credit among us, and compare them with the Clergy, as to the general Course and Tenour of their Lives, and you will soon find, (though, I thank God, too, there are some of exemplary Sanctity of Life, in every Order and Profession) yet, I say, you will soon find, upon such a Comparison, what I now say to be true. Or only dress up in your Imagination (which is a very good one) any one of those Orders and Professions, in the *Clerical Habit*, put them on the *Gown*, and clap upon their Heads the *broad-brim'd Beaver Hat*, with the *Rose* on it; then place them, some in Town, and some in the Country, so that they shall not be suspected

suspected to be other than real Clergymen, and let them pursue the same Course of Life they did before; and, in a few Months, you will imagine you see every Mouth open against them, and hear every Place ring, and that in another manner than the most infamous Places do now, with the Corruption and Degeneracy, the intolerable Indiscretions and Vices of the Clergy. Those that *before* lived in some Credit, as Laymen, will be *now* little esteemed, and pass for *worthless*, if not *scandalous Ministers*. And those who enjoyed, *before their Clerical Appearance*, great Wealth, or high Dignities, unenvied, will *now* hardly be thought deserving a Country School, or Curacy. It is not pretended to be denied, but there are some, who really are of the Cloth, that are a Disgrace to it. The Clergy are but Men, and, to be sure, come into the World with the same original Corruption and Vitiosity that other Men do; and therefore it is no wonder, if they have, *all*, their *Faults* and *Blemishes*, their *Frailties* and *Imperfections*, and some are not free from greater *Crimes* and *Scandals*. It may be, you will say, we hear not so often of Scandals arising among the Dissenting Ministers, as among the Clergy. Would it be reasonable to expect you should? Is it likely, there should be found as many among *ten*, as an *hundred*; among a *hundred*, as a *thousand*; or among a *thousand*, as *ten thousand* Persons? In most Neighbourhoods, perhaps, there are *ten*, and in some, *twice that Number* of regular Clergymen, to *one* Dissenting Minister. And if but *one* of that Number be found, not so blameless and irreproachable in his Life, as that single Gentleman happens to be, we are presently bid to take notice, how much better *your* Ministers live, than *ours*. But it does not follow. If you would judge rightly in this Case, you must produce an equal
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Number of each Sort; and for *twenty* regular Clergymen (suppose) all living together in the same Neighbourhood, all perfectly known to you, you must bring us *twenty* Dissenting Ministers, though you should fetch a Compass of forty Miles for them, to whom, excepting, perhaps, two or three, we are absolute Strangers, and of whose Lives we have never heard any Character, good or bad. Or if it happens that we have heard of *some* of them any ill thing, we have not, perhaps, the means to satisfy ourselves whether the thing be true or false; and so, it will, probably, pass for an idle and uncertain Report. And if we *suppose*, or though we *know* it to be true, yet as we know not their Persons, and hardly, perhaps, their Names, it will make little Impression on our Minds, and the Scandal of it will soon be forgotten.

While we are considering the Lives of your Ministers, it will be proper, as it is obvious, to observe, that they are not so much exposed to *undeserved* Obloquy and Censure, as most of the Clergy of the Established Church unavoidably are. For having no farther Concern with the Pockets of the People than they themselves like, and are pleased to permit, they happily escape the morose or peevish Reflections of the Covetous or Knavish, which our Clergy, by the most reasonable and conscionable Demand of their legal Rights, often bring upon themselves. If a Clergyman ever demands *Small Dues*, *Avarice* is presently objected to him. It will be said, *It is beneath him to mind such Things*; though, it may be, through the Sacrilege of former Times, he has scarcely any thing else left him. If he finds himself obliged, at any time, to take the *Remedy of Law*, though it were in the *easiest* and *cheapest* Method the Law prescribes, against such as withhold these Dues, or greater ones, the Charge
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of *Contentiousness* is sure to be added to the former. And if he is not content with those poor *Pittances* which the Consciences of *some* of his Parishioners would serve *them* to pay him, or which they fancy is all that is due to him, according to those crude Notions of Law and Right which they frame out of their own Heads, he shall hardly escape the Imputation of being injurious and oppressive. This is the hard Fate of most of *our* Clergy, especially the *Vicars*; while *your* Ministers not only live at Ease, and free from Vexation, upon voluntary Contributions, but free also from those *unmerited* Reflections and Reproaches, which will often fall upon those of the Establishment. And I have sometimes been ready to think, that, if the Wisdom of the Legislature could find out a Way to settle, *on a solid Foundation*, upon the *poor Vicar*, some equivalent and independent Revenue, in Lieu of these *small Matters*, it would not only secure his Peace, but help him to support and keep up his Credit and Esteem, better than now he *can* do, among his Neighbours, and be (consequently) a real Advancement to Religion.

Then again, the Tempers and Conducts of *your* People and *ours*, in regard to the *real* Faults of Ministers, are very different. *Our* People, knowing they do not depend altogether upon the Credit of their Guides, but have the Laws for the Support of the Church they are of, are apt to think there is no need of *close* and *subtle dealing*; and therefore are observed to be undisguised in all their Conduct, free and open (probably too much so) in their Discourses and Censures of whatever they take to be amiss in the Lives of their Ministers. You shall hear them talk every Day of the Faults and Misbehaviours of this and that Clergyman, *with as little Reserve* as they would of their best Qualities and greatest

greatest Virtues; while your People are observed to be *wonderfully secret* in *these*, as indeed, in *all* your Affairs. The arrantest Gossip and Tittle-tattle in the Congregation shall carry it with all the Closeness and Secrecy of a Confessor, in regard to the Failings of her Pastor; and they are seldom publicly known, unless an open Rupture with his People or his Entertaining Thoughts of Conformity brings them out. And then indeed, what was before *spoken only in the Ear in Closets, shall be proclaimed upon the House-tops.*

It should be considered too, that as their Faults and Failings are more carefully concealed, so their Virtues and good Qualities are more industriously published. Such as lie under the Imputation of Heresy, or have set themselves at the Head of a Party divided from the Church, will never want Virtues and Accomplishments, *Intellectual*, or *Moral*. 'Tis now, for that, just as it was in the Days of *Tertullian*, *Nusquam facilius proficitur quam in castris rebellium*. Men's Characters improve strangely, and take a wonderful Growth, in that Situation, and that, I doubt, is one Motive and Inducement to many to make choice of it. Those who bear Religion no good Will, will be sure to be the *Trumpeters* of *their* Praises, because they help to *confound* it. And those of their own Party are always found forwarder and louder in commending and extolling them above their Merits and Deservings, than such as adhere to their Orthodox and regular Ministers ever are to do *them* common Justice. You must have observed, this is the general Disposition of your Lay People towards their Ministers. And your Ministers themselves seem agreed to take all Occasions to magnify one another; some Affectations of which sort I think I can plainly see, particularly in their Funeral Sermons, almost always in
regard

regard to the Dead, and sometimes the Living. By such Methods as these they may have, possibly, acquired a Reputation of Strictness of Life, above our Clergy, among the weak and prejudiced, while more competent and impartial Judges see little or nothing they have, in that respect, to boast of; hardly, indeed, so much, as, when their Circumstances, Situations, and Professions are considered, it may seem reasonable to expect.

For there are, Sir, some Considerations of that sort which make us naturally look for, and think we may justly expect to find, a greater Sanctity of Manners among *them*, than the Conforming Clergy. Their very Non-conformity is founded upon an open Profession of great *Tenderness of Conscience*, which cannot bear the least Instance of Sin, and starts at any Appearance of Evil. And if, *under such a Profession*, their Lives should be found, in any Degree, disorderly, they cannot be ignorant they should be, deservedly, hissed at, and esteemed some of the vilest of Men. They must be also sensible, how much they depend, for their Maintenance, upon the good Thoughts their People have of them, and the favourable Opinion of those in Power for their Toleration. Thus, not only the Reputation, but the very Being and Subsistence of the Party they have set themselves at the Head of, depends upon the Goodness of their Characters, as Men of Piety and Virtue. And these are strong Obligations, if Reasons of Conveniency and present Interest may be called Obligations, to endeavour to *appear* such. I speak not thus to insinuate that they *only appear* such. Many, doubtless, and I hope most of them, *do* study to *be* what they are obliged to *appear* to be; tho' it is likely too, there may be *some* who only study *Appearances*. And, as they have *special Reasons* to approve themselves

good Men, so they have *fewer Temptations* to be otherwise, not being exposed to so many Influences prejudicial to the Virtue of Men, as the Clergy not only in ours, but in all national Churches whatever, unavoidably are. And if, notwithstanding all this, our Clergy are much upon a footing with *them* in all manner of virtuous and holy Living, it is, in my Opinion, a just Matter of Commendation to them.

By this time, Sir, I should hope you might be pretty well satisfied, that the Lives of *your* Ministers do not excel, in point of Strictness and Regularity, those of *our* Clergy, so much as you seemed before to have thought: But if you are still of Opinion that they do, I must, I think, leave you to enjoy it, there being no Way to extort it from you, but by canvassing and comparing the Lives and Characters of Particulars, which (not to repeat the Reasons I before offered, why I declined such a Proceeding) would be as *foolish* to attempt, and as *impossible* to do, in any manner that shall be tolerably satisfactory, as it would be to determine who are the *fairest*, the *best shaped*, or *handsomest* Men. One thing, however, I have to offer you, in Balance; and that is, that the Lives of *our* Clergy are free from some Sorts of Guilt which, pardon me, Sir, lie heavy upon *your* Ministers; I mean, the Guilt of their *uncatholic* and *schismatical* Proceedings. Most People, when they hear of the good or the bad Lives of any, think of nothing else but their being *chaste* and *temperate*, *just* and *honest* in their Dealings, *charitable* to the Poor, or otherwise, and discharging *well* or *ill* the relative Duties of Life; whether they practise the Virtues, or are free from the Vices of the interior and spiritual kind, they are not apt to consider. But they never reflect how they behave

behave as Members of the Christian Society, the Church of God, and fulfil the Duties which they owe it. And yet this, surely, when we are speaking of Christians, should always enter into the Notion of good, or of bad living. In regard to these Matters, I mean those of the last sort, your Ministers, Sir, are notoriously peccant, throwing off the Authority of those whom they ought to obey and submit themselves to, and acting in open Contempt of them, dividing themselves causelessly from a sound Part of the Catholic Church which they belong to, and gathering to themselves Churches out of it; by which means the Household of God is divided into innumerable Sects and Parties, to the great Dishonour of Religion, the Scandal of Jews, Turks, and Heathens, the Sport of Infidels, unsettling the Weak, grieving the Minds of good Men, the Loss of Truth and Peace, and the utter Extinction of Charity among us. What some People may think of a Procedure which draws after it a Train of *such Consequences*, I know not; but will venture to say, all the Wit and Ingenuity in the Nation will never reconcile it with *holy living*. Sure I am, such as bring into the Church strange Doctrines, and cause Divisions in it, are called by St. Paul, *Carnal*, 1 Cor. iii. 4. *evil Workers*, Phil. iii. 2. *deseitful Workers*, 2 Cor. xi. 13. and *disorderly Walkers*, in another Place, 2 Thess. iii. 6. And why those who are called *so* by an Apostle, should be by *us* called, *absolutely good Livers*, I must needs own I am at a loss to understand, and leave you, Sir, to consider. And though I am far from presuming to judge any in regard to his eternal State, yet, when I consider with what Severity the fore-mentioned Disorders stand censured, and how the Authors or the wilful Abettors of them are stigmatized in the Word of God, I cannot doubt but *for these things he will bring them into Judgment*. And,

perhaps, it may be found as hard to render an Account of *these*, as of *some other* Sins, which are esteemed *grosser*, and more *scandalous*. A thing, Sir, which I heartily wish you would lay to heart, and reflect seriously upon.

Let us now, Sir, if you please, go on to consider the Lives of the *common Professors* on both Sides. Upon this Head, though you always speak in Terms of great Moderation, others triumph over us without Mercy; but with little Reason, as, I hope, will plainly appear, when all fitting *Allowances* and *Deductions* have been made.

I must therefore protest against owning some for Members of the Church of *England*, who now, (I am afraid) pass with you for such; Scepticks, Infidels, Libertines, and Rakes, Sharpers, Bullies, and blasphemous Gamesters, and a great Part of the *Beau Monde*, who never go to Church (if ever they do go) with the least Thought or Intention to serve God, or to profit by the Instructions they receive there, and will go as readily to a Meeting, whenever they have the same Reasons for going thither. I must also be bold to exclude many of your *Tip-top People*, who are too high and great to mind any Religion, or to care what becomes of it. All these (I suppose) are called *ours*, because they are not *yours*; and they may be as well called *yours*, because they are not *ours*.

There is one thing, I imagine, which helps a good deal to make such disorderly People pass, in common Estimation, rather for *ours* than *yours*; and that is, their being more frequently and instantly applied to, admonished, and reproved, in order to reclaim them, by the Clergy, than by Dissenting Ministers. When there are any Persons of debauched Principles, or of loose Morals in a Parish,
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and who behave themselves notoriously and scandalously there, it is expected by all, that the Parish Minister should, and he thinks himself bound to deal with them, to shew them their Error, or their Sin. He considers every Man in his Parish, let him be what he will, whether Libertine or Infidel, whether Papist or Protestant Dissenter, nay, though he were a Jew, Mahometan, or Heathen, as one of the Souls committed to his Care at his Institution, and thinks himself obliged, as he really is, *ex officio*, to instruct and admonish him, as he has Opportunity, and make such pastoral Applications to him, as his Case requires. But no body looks for this from the Dissenting Minister *in* the Place, nor does he think himself concerned, as indeed he is not, (otherwise, I mean, than in the way of brotherly Admonition and Reproof, such as one Christian Neighbour owes another) with any, besides those who *own* him for their Pastor, and *profess* themselves willing to walk with him in Christian Ordinances. Hence (as I said) it comes to pass, that this sort of Men are commonly thought to have some Relation to the Church more than to the Meeting; though, in truth and reality, they are related to both alike, that is, indeed, to neither. Perhaps it will be said, they *call* themselves Churchmen, and talk for the Church. Not all of them, I presume. Some of them do not *pretend* to be of *our* Church, and *talk always against it*, whilst others *are* of your Churches, and always *talk for* them. For there are, Sir, Dissenting Infidels, as well as Libertines, to my Knowledge. And it is remarkable, that the whole Tribe of Infidels have a particular Spite at the Church and Clergy, while you are *well* with them. They do *our* Clergy the greatest Honour by always railing at them, while they *dishonour* your Ministers with their *Panegyrics*. What
are

are their Motives to this different Treatment of *you* and *us*, it, surely, concerns you, Sir, and may be worth your while to enquire.

But what, if after all, *every one of these* should be pleased to call themselves *Churchmen*?—Suppose, I should have a Fancy to call myself a Patient of Sir *Hans's*, and pique myself for having so great a Man for my Physician, while, perhaps, I never consulted him in all my Life, or, if I did, would never take the Medicines he ordered, nor follow the Methods he prescribed. Am I therefore his Patient? And is the Doctor to answer for all the Infirmities and Distempers I have about me, or his Skill in Physic to be questioned, on account of my ill Health? I hope not. So, if a profligate immoral Wretch, who takes effectual Care not to be the better for the Church, by seldom or never coming at it; or, when he happens to be there, not minding, but rather disdaining and casting behind him all the Instructions that are given him, shall, nevertheless, take it into his Head, for some foolish Reason he may have to himself, to call himself a *Churchman*, Is he therefore a *Churchman*? And is the Church accountable for all the Crimes and Disorders of his Life? I desire to know the Reason why.—In a word, none should be esteemed Members of the Church, nor the Church accountable for any, but such as own its Authority, submit to its Orders and Rules of Discipline, and frequent its Worship. And when *all the rest* have been *thrown out*, and *some reasonable*, but very *small* Allowances have been made for *these*, the Comparison, I verily believe, will end not at all to *our* Disadvantage.

It is a thing confessed, and by *your* Author, Sir, among others; and none, I think, will have

the Face to deny it, (unless, perchance, it were some fiery Papist, such as *Bellarmino*, who says, *In the Catholic Church there are some bad Men, but, among the Heretics, not one good, no, not one*). I say it is owned, and cannot be denied, that *there are, in the Church of England, many holy Souls, who are of the first Rank in the School of Christ, Men who walk humbly with God in all the known Duties of the Christian State, who are dear to him, and whose Names have an honourable Place in the Book of Life.* And give me leave to observe, that these, for the generality, are the strictest and most zealous Members of the Church, not who *talk most* for it, and *cry it up most*, but who *reverence it most*, and live in the greatest *Subjection* to it. Which is just the *reverse* of what we see in the Church of *Rome*, where the best and holiest Men are observed to be commonly such, as have the *least* regard for the *peculiar* Doctrines and Practices of their Church, and are indeed but half Catholics. A pretty good Argument in my Opinion, that the Doctrine of that Church is *unholy*, that of our Church *holy*, such as, far from undermining and destroying (as your Author injuriously pretends) does really further and promote all manner of Holiness of Life.

It is not to be thought, that the Christian Doctrine, though in its utmost Purity, will make all, who profess to receive and embrace it, good Christians; nor is it pretended that all the Members of our Church are such; it is too evident there are, among us many *national* Christians, as there are also among *you*. And if it prove true, that there are not *quite so many* even in proportion, we shall not wonder at *that*, if we do but consider the different Circumstances *you* and *we* are under. Those who have *no* Religion, but nevertheless, for their Credit's sake among their Neighbours, or other Reasons of the like sort, are obliged to profess *some*, will fall, on
course,

course, into the established Church, unless they are determined, which indeed often happens, by some particular Views and Interests, to go another Way, and join themselves to some Party of Dissenters: Not because the Doctrine or Discipline of the Church is more indulgent, or better suited to the Consciences and Lives of these Men, but because it is the Religion *by Law established*, the *public and national*, the most general, and therefore esteemed the most *fashionable* Religion. Such sort of Men always affect to be in the *most and best Company*: They love the beaten, the *high Road*, whether it be of Truth or Error, and would have been Presbyterians or Independants (or, perhaps, any thing else) if *their* Religions had been as long the Establishment as ours, and as much followed.

Let us, if you please, suppose the Church and Monarchy, after the great Rebellion and Usurpation, had never been restored, and your Presbyterians or congregational Men (for I know not well, Sir, which of those Names you *like best* to be called by, but take which of them you please) put the case, I say, that either of these had continued in Possession of the Churches and public Revenues, and either of their Systems had been the Religion of the Magistrate, and the legal Establishment to this Day: In this case, we (I dare say) *the Episcopal Party of the Church of England*, if we had not been quite rooted out, as *not fit to be tolerated*, (which indeed is most likely) should have been made, before now, the *sober Party*, and you, with all your supposed *Advantages and Obligations*, would have been as much below us in Strictness and Holiness of Life, as *we now are*, or are *supposed to be*, below you. I am ready to think it is *so* all the Christian World over.—The inferior tolerated Sects in other Countries did not, generally, set-up, as
5 they

they did here, under Pretences of greater Purity of Life, but only of greater Purity of Doctrine; and yet, the Followers of these, I guess, will be found, for the most part, to walk more orderly, than those of the established Religion of the Country. The public established national Religion, whatever it be, most abounds with mere *nominal* Professors; and, in the Nature of Things, it cannot well be otherwise: For those who are *void* of Religion, and (as we say) have it to *choose*, will naturally *choose* (as I said before) that which is *uppermost*, which the *great People* generally profess, and *they* can therefore profess with more Credit, Security, and Advantage.

I know it has been suggested, that the Church of *Scotland* is an Exception to *this*; nor will I pretend to be *Scotsman* enough to speak decisively to the Point. This, however, is certain, that the Episcopal Men would not yield to the other in point of Regularity and Strictness of Life, and some of their eminent Writers have pretended, they were superior to 'em, in those Respects. And indeed, according to all the Information I have received, there is, among the Episcopal Party, if not so much of the *form*, yet not less of the *power* of Godliness, and if less *Enthusiasm*, yet quite as much of *real* and *substantial* Religion, as there is among the Presbyterians of that Nation. *Enthusiasm*, Sir, which the latter (they say) both Ministers and People, have a peculiar Turn and Disposition to, and are in a high Degree possessed with, is a glorious thing: The Glare of it dazzles the Eyes of the Weak and Ignorant: It passes with *them* for *Sanctity of Life*, or an infallible Mark of it; when it neither *is that*, nor, perhaps, is *accompanied* with it. However, considering in the most favourable light those Appearances of Zeal and Devotion, and supposing there *is*, among *them*, as much *real Religion*

gion and genuine Piety, as there may seem to any one to be, we ought to remember, that it was but Yesterday, in Comparison, that *they* were *hoisted up* into an *Establishment*, and the Episcopalians *brought under* them: And we may suppose, the Spirit of an Establishment, and that of an inferior discouraged Sect, is not yet quite worn out of *either*, as, perchance, in a little longer Tract of Time, may be the Case of *both* of them.

And now, Sir, give me leave to consider the Lives of Dissenters, which I promise you to do with all the Tenderness and Reserve that the Nature of my Design will permit. I can bear you record, that there are *many* like yourself, who are *in earnest* in Religion; and most of you, perhaps, have a *Zeal* for it, *of one sort or other*. I don't wonder at it; for few, besides such (as I intimated before) care to be of an underling Sect, and these, especially if they are Persons of some particular Complexions, run naturally into it; and the more, if it *be*, or rather *has lately been*, in any degree, oppressed. This, indeed, is not *quite* your Case, now, in this Nation: You are upon a footing with the rest of his Majesty's Subjects, as to all worldly Advantages that I can think of, except your being excluded (*so far as the Laws can exclude you*) from public Trusts and Employments, (of which I have spoken already) and the Charge some of you are at to maintain your own Ministers; which, however, is but a Trifle, and made up to you abundantly by the mighty Advantages you reap from your firm, and almost *inviolable Attachment* to all the Secular Interests of each other: For this, Sir, is observed of you *all*, but of the Quakers above *all* others. A great Part of you, however most of the elder sort, if they are not *themselves* under any Oppression, are yet the Children of those who did undergo, it is true, some Inconveniencies

niciencies on a religious Account. And therefore, considering the many Lessons of Piety they are presumed to have had from their zealous Parents, may be justly expected to excel the Bulk and Generality of Churchmen, in the Goodness and Holiness of their Lives.

We should also consider, what Order of Men the main Body of Dissenters are composed of. Now, they are mostly found in Cities, and great Towns, among the trading Part of the People, not by reason (as, I think, Mr. *Peirce* has somewhere suggested) these, generally, are a more sensible Sort of People than those in the Villages, and capable of forming truer Notions of Religion, but because their Ministers have, for the most Part, taken Care to have their Residence, and to open their Churches, in those populous Places, where a greater Harvest might be reasonably expected. And these, being chiefly of the middle Ranks of Men, having *neither Poverty nor Riches*, are freer, as from the Temptations, so from the Vices and Corruptions which usually attend those two Conditions. It is now a common Observation, that what little Religion there is among us is in the *Middle Region*, not among the Great and Honourable, Persons of Birth, and Quality, and great Estate, nor yet among the miserable Poor, but among those who, by Care and Industry, support themselves in a reasonable Degree of Plenty. And as it happens (through the Cause before-mentioned) that the Dissenters are chiefly of this Sort, so it would be a Wonder if they did not excel Churchmen, (who are as well of the highest and the lowest, as of the middle Class of Men) in their Regards to Religion, and the Regularity of their Lives and Conversations. And yet, after all, (excluding those

whom I before excluded) the difference is not, at present, *very great*, hardly *any*, so far as my Observation goes. And, whoever lives to see it, will probably find all Distinction between Churchmen and Dissenters, from their Lives, absolutely lost in another Generation, unless Persecution and Tribulation, which you plainly want as well as we, should arise, to stir up and re-kindle the Sparks of practical Religion and Goodness, which are ready to die away, both among *you* and *us*. The present State of Dissenters, I rather chuse to set forth in the Words of your Author, than in my own, as they may be more acceptable to *you*, and less liable to any Charge or Suspicion of undue Representation or Aggravation. He plainly intimates, *You have laid aside some peculiar laudable Practices of your Ancestors, the ancient Non-conformists, whereby they had gained an honourable Character, and great Reputation in the Nation; that you, like others, too much indulge yourselves in, and give a loose to the gayer Vanities, and all the perilous, if not unlawful Diversions of the Age; that you affect, like your Neighbours, all the Luxuries of Life, in your Dress and Furniture, Food, Equipage, and Attendance; whereby infamous Bankruptcies are become frequent among you, and hardly reckoned any Crime; and that, as to keeping regular Hours for the various Duties to God and Man, abstaining from vain Company, from Taverns, and public Houses, and much Wine, preserving better Order in Families, and maintaining the daily Worship of God there, there has been for the last threescore or fourscore Years, as great, or greater Degeneracy, in proportion, reigning and visible among you, than among your conforming Neighbours.* These things, it is true, are delivered

Humble Attempt, p. 227, &c.

here

here and there, mostly in the form of *Queries* put to your Consciences. But whoever understands the Force of Language, as this Gentleman does, (no body better, to be sure) must know, that *Queries* so put, are as strong, as plain and positive Assertions.

It is possible, Sir, such Circumstances and Considerations as the foregoing, might not be actually present to your Thoughts, before I had suggested them: But you have Discernment and Penetration enough to enter easily and thoroughly into them, which, I doubt, the greatest Part of Dissenters cannot do: They are used to look only on the Surface of Things; and because they see most of their Way keep the Lord's Day in a *severer* (I was going to say a more *Judaical*) manner, than many of those who go to the Churches do, they presently conclude their Lives are better in the whole; and hence are easily led to think of their Religion more highly than they ought to think. I will therefore suppose, for Argument's sake, that they *do* live better Lives than we, as much better as you please; and see whether any Conclusion can fairly be drawn from thence, in favour of *your* Churches.

I must say, if this Principle, *The better Life, always the better Religion*, be true, it is a most useful one; not less useful than the Doctrine of implicate Faith among the Papists: For as *that* Doctrine, thoroughly imbibed, saves *them* abundance of Trouble, in examining the several Doctrines of Religion, so *this* will save *us* as much, in trying the Merits of the several Parties in Religion, in order to determine ourselves which of them to be of. If it be true, what have we (Fools!) been doing, one Party of Christians against another, for so many Centuries of Years? Some of us have been disputing, and writing Books of Controversy, and the whole World will

will hardly contain them. We have been proving, each of us, from Scripture, Reason, Antiquity, and I know not what Topics besides, that our own Religion is the best; and we are now (for what I can see) no nearer an end of these Controversies than at the beginning. Others have been as much employed in reading the Books that have been written, and scrutinizing the Religions that have been offered to them, have gone from Sect to Sect, in order to prove all things, but have never been able to hold fast any thing, to fix and settle all their Lives long; or if they have settled, it has often been in the most *wrong* Way they could have taken: Whereas, here is a short and compendious Way we have at last hit upon, to be *presently* and *certainly* in the right. We need only lie by a while, watching the Lives and Manners of the several Churches or Sects in Religion, to see which are best, and then choose our Religion accordingly.

This Way to find out the true Church and Religion is so easy and convenient, that, methinks, one is strangely prejudiced in its Favour, and cannot help wishing it were the *right* and *safe* Way to bring us to it. But alas! Sir, alas! we cannot open our Eyes, without seeing it is *wrong*, and will *mislead* us: For do you not see, all about you, how little the Lives of Men correspond and agree with their Religion; that some live *better*, who have a *worse* Religion, and some again *worse*, who have a *better*? Are not the *Lives* of Quakers (for example) in your own Opinion, as innocent and inoffensive, and every Way as good as those of other Dissenters, particularly those of your *own* Denomination? But you don't think their *Religion* so good by a great deal. I suppose, you think them better than those of Churchmen: But do you hold their Religion to be better, and to come nearer true and genuine

genuine Christianity? I question that very much; nay, I am pretty confident of the contrary, and that, were you to quit your own Religion, or could you have no Opportunity for the Exercise of it, and *must be* either Churchman or Quaker, you would certainly choose, without the least Scruple, or one Moment's hesitating, to be the Churchman. It is commonly said, that the *Lives* of Protestants are by no means answerable to the *Power* and *Purity* of their *Principles*, and those who know the World have thought, they are but little, if any thing, better, (taking them all together) than those of Papists. Nay, in the very Infancy of the Reformation, some of the Reformers did not scruple to pronounce and describe them *worse*: Though I own too, the Complaints of pious and zealous Men of the Wickedness of those under their Charge, in order to reform them, are not always *historically just*, but rather declamatory aggravated Descriptions, not to be interpreted too strictly. Their Time and Zeal for many Years, were wholly employed in reforming the *Doctrines* of the Church, and they were not at leisure to mind the *Discipline* thereof, and the *Manners* of the People. And therefore, I imagine, they were, *then*, and perhaps have been *ever since*, pretty much like those of their Popish Neighbours. And yet, we are all agreed, there is a vast Difference, in Point of Purity and Goodness, between the Religion of Papists and of Protestants, even that of the Church of *England*, as much Malevolence as some of you have against it. And if, from *Seets* and *Societies* of Christians, we should come to *particular* Persons, (and why should we not?) some we shall find, within the Pale of the *same* Church, taught and believing the *same* Doctrines, and partaking of the *same* Ordinances, excellently good and holy Men, while others are void of all Holiness,
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and, perhaps, unholy and profane. — In a word, were we to chuse our Religion by examining, not the Doctrines and Practices thereof, but the Lives of its Professors, we should be soon in a Maze, and in danger of falling into the grossest Errors. And, truly, I don't know but a less stedfast and sincere Christian than yourself might be in some danger of losing his very Christianity.

For yourself, Sir, I am satisfied you are a Christian upon thorough Conviction, and that nothing can move you from the Faith of the Gospel, and your blessed Hope in the Lord *Jesus*. But suppose you were not so good a Christian as you are, suppose you were hanging in a State of Suspence, or of Neutrality and Indifference about Religion, and had your own yet to seek, God above knows, whither this Principle, if your Mind were thoroughly possessed with it, might carry you. If you had lived in *India* in the Days of the old *Gymnosophists*, or in *Gaul* and *Britain* in the Days of our *Druids*, you might have been easily drawn in to their Superstitions and Idolatries, by your Admiration of their Lives, and their continual Contemplation of Divine Things. If you were now in *China* or *Japan*, the Contenance and Sobriety of the *Bonzes* might induce you to entertain a good Opinion of their God *Fo*; or if in *Siam*, the more exemplary Lives of the *Talapouts* there, their perpetual Silence, refraining from public Spectacles and Diversions, Watchings and Fasting, with other Rigours and Austerities practised upon their Bodies, their Temperance and Chastity, their Contempt of the World, and their continual preaching from Morning to Night, would probably convince you the true Religion was with *them*, and make you a devout Worshipper of *Semmonokbodom*. But, if these Suppositions are too odious, I will suppose you

you a Christian of the Apostles Days; and then, in all probability, you would have sided with those who *forbad to marry, and commandell to abstain from Meats*, and thought the Apostles themselves took and gave more Liberty than they ought, and walked too much according to the Flesh. If you had been a Christian of the primitive Times, it is ten to one but you would have renounced the Communion of the Catholic Church, and been a *Montanist*, an *Encratite*, a *Priscilianist*, or one of those other Hereticks, who insulted the Church for its Want of Discipline, and the Members of it for their want of Strictness and Purity of Life, and, to say Truth, did *really outdo* them, in *Strictnesses of all sorts*, more than any of you can pretend to outdo us of the Church of England. And truly, Sir, I have somewhat wondered that, considering the Road of Thinking you are in, you have not yet gone over to some other Sect, that is more refined and spiritual than your own. Pardon me, Sir, if I speak freely to you upon this Occasion: I am somewhat jealous over you, lest, as you think the Truth and Goodness of any Religion is to be estimated by the Goodness and Spirituality of its Professors, you should be inclined to leave your *present Way*, and to embrace the *Methodism* of Mr. *Whitfield*, which I think *worse*: For *he* and his Associates do certainly preach up, and pretend to *practise*, greater Spiritualities and Abstractions from the World, than those of *your Way* do. Perhaps, you may think those extraordinary things which they pretend to, such as wholly abstaining from indifferent things as unlawful, renouncing the common Enjoyments of the World, the irrational Liberalities to the Poor, which they so much cry up, and leaving their Stations in the World to follow,

every where, the Preachers of these high-strained Doctrines, are no Parts of Christian Holiness. I readily grant you they are *not*: But then, you may please to consider, whether *some* things, whereby *your* People have gained the Character of extraordinary Sanctity above their Neighbours, and particularly, that over-rigorous and precise Way of keeping the Lord's Day, which *many* of you affect, be any *Parts* of the Holiness of a Christian, or only the *Guises* and *Semblances* thereof. And I should think you might as easily mistake some of *his* Instances of *Over-righteousness*, for *real Holiness*, as *that* I have just now mentioned. And indeed, this is certain, that those who measure the Goodness of all Religions by the Goodness of those who profess them, are always exceedingly apt to mistake such things for Christian Holiness, and have commonly done it. And that Mistake has been the Occasion of many a Schism in the Church.

This was one of the Causes (as I intimated in the beginning of my Letter) of the great Increase and multiplying of Sects, when the Church of *England* was removed, in the Days of our Forefathers. And some of *your* Writers, particularly old Mr. *Baxter*, whom I mention, because I know you have a great Regard for his Judgment and Authority, as well as Reverence for his Memory, saw this, and endeavoured to guard People against it. Though, by the way too, you will allow me to say, no body, in the Days of Prelacy, *strove* more than he, or *contributed* more to draw them away from the Church, by declaiming against the Looseness and Dissoluteness of its Members, and magnifying the Godliness of the Sectaries. However, *afterwards*, when he found this way of thinking and talking turned against himself and his own Party,

Party, to make further Divisions and Subdivisions from it, he quickly came into more reasonable and sober Sentiments. *Then* he set up for *curing* the Divisions of the Church: And one of the *Cures* he ^aprescribes is, *to take heed, lest you be tempted to reject a good Cause, because it is owned by some bad Persons; or to like a bad Cause, when it is owned by Men that are otherwise good; and that you judge not of the Faith and Cause by the Persons, when you should judge of the Persons rather by the Faith and Cause.* He does not dispute, but that great numbers of the best sort of Men *may be*, and frequently *are*, in great Errors: *For it often falls out* (says he) *that honest People are like straying Sheep; if one leaps over the Hedge, the rest strive to follow.* And, on the other side, *the worst sort of Men often hold fast the Truth.* And he shews, from the common Workings of human Nature, how it comes to be so. Some stand up for the Truth, because it is the Religion of their *King and Country.* Some make it a *Point of Honour* (a mistaken Point of Honour, I confess) not to depart from it, because it was *the Religion of their Forefathers*, and what they had the good Luck to be brought up in. Some again stick to it for the Peace and Quiet of their Consciences, which, though none of the best, cannot, perhaps, brook an Opposition to, or Departure from it, when it is known and manifest. Others defend it, as it gives them an Opportunity to display their *Wit and Learning.* And there are those, doubtless, who defend it, that they may have it to throw in the Teeth of those, to disgrace and lessen them, who, otherwise, are better Men than themselves, but happen in that Point, to be erroneous.—See, Sir, how many Reasons there are

^a *Cure of Church Divisions*, Direct. 43.

in human Nature, were we to go no farther, for *bad Men's* adhering, as they often do, to the *best* Religion. And *some* of these Reasons, or, at least, *all together*, I should hope, might fairly account, with you, for such Mens living in the Communion of the Church, and being zealous for it, without any Disgrace to the Church itself, and without any Occasion given for our being put in Mind that *the Tree is known by its Fruits*.

I mention now, Sir, that *Aphorism* of our Lord, because, I remember, you were pleased to apply it, as I have heard others do, to this Subject; and I *then* neglected, I know not how, to say any thing to it.—Yes, Sir, our Lord does say, and he had it often in his Mouth, that *the Tree is known by its Fruits*. False Prophets, he says, are known by their Fruits; and false Churches, say I, are known by *theirs*. But what are those Fruits? Perhaps you will say, it cannot be their Doctrines, because their Doctrines are the things we are to judge *of*, not the things we are to judge *by*. But there is no Absurdity, that I can see, in judging *of* some *by* others; *of* those Doctrines which they openly profess and publickly avow, and which they, *at first*, propose to you to bring you over to, *by* those (generally more mischievous) which they *afterwards* labour to infuse into you, but would not venture to trust you with, till they had got you in their Power, and made sure of you: A common Way (they say) of dealing with new Converts in the Church of *Rome*. Or, perhaps, by the *Fruits* we are to know them by, our Saviour means the *Views* with which they propagate their Doctrines, (which, if you wait a while, or watch them narrowly, will plainly appear) and the Uses to which they, *afterwards*, apply them, such (for instance) as getting a Power over the
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Consciences of the People, keeping them in a slavish Subjection to themselves, or preparing them for any mischievous or rebellious Enterprize; or else, filling their own Pockets, enriching their Church, and promoting the Ends of worldly Greatness and Dominion. But if you still insist they are the Actions of their Lives that are here meant, I shall not contend with you, provided you mean such Actions, as the Principles and Doctrines they teach *naturally* tend to, and have a *direct Influence* to produce. But if you mean other Actions which those Principles and Doctrines have no Tendency to, or Influence upon, they are not the Fruits which our Saviour means the Tree was to be known by. By such Actions you can no more know what their Religion is, whether good or bad, than you can know the Goodness of any Tree in your Garden, by observing the Fruit of an Ivy that happens to twine about it. If (for Example) a Papist assassinate his natural and lawful Prince, being a Protestant, that Act of his is such as his Religion may be known by, because his Religion *excites* him to, and *warrants* him to do it. But if he picks your Pocket, steals out of your House, or robs you upon the Highway, those Acts are not the Fruits whereby his Religion can be known, because, bad as it is, it encourages nothing, that I know of, of that Nature.

You will permit me, Sir, to pursue our Saviour's Similitude a little farther, in hopes of deriving somewhat more Light upon this Subject. He certainly means no more, because no more is true, than that a good Tree will bring forth good Fruit, *if nothing external binders*; for otherwise, it may produce very bad, or none at all. Be it ever so good in its own Nature, the very best *sui generis*, if it be planted after a wrong manner, in an improper Soil, or an unfriendly Climate, there may be no Fruit, or what

is may be very poor and bad, or some accidental Blast coming upon it may destroy it all in the Blossom. In like manner, the *best* Religion will infallibly produce the *best* Practice, when there is nothing to *obstruct* its Operation. But Circumstances often keep it from doing so. Custom, Education, natural Complexion, and other things, hinder its Effect, on particular Persons. And, with regard to whole Churches, the particular Situations they may be placed in, such as Security or Danger, Prosperity or Adversity, a peaceful or troubled State of public Affairs, the good or the bad Examples of Princes and great Men, and many other things of a like nature, will always hinder or promote the Efficacy of its Doctrines upon the Lives of Men. And, therefore, you see, that under the same Constitution of Religion, under the Profession of the same Doctrines and Opinions, People, in different Times and Places, live very differently, *now*, or *here*, in a more loose and dissolute, *then*, or *there*, in a stricter manner, as these Circumstances happen to influence and determine. Nay, it is sometimes seen, that Religion, in a very corrupt and degenerate State, where all Circumstances of this Nature are very favourable to its Interests, produces as great Effects, and makes Men live as virtuously, and, perhaps, more so, than it does under such Circumstances as are unfavourable to it, where it is professed in much greater Purity.

After all, Sir, I would not be thought universally to assert, that the Goodness or Badness of Mens Lives is a Matter of no Consideration at all, in making a Judgment concerning the Truth or Goodness of any Religion. I allow it to have Place, and to be also of considerable Weight in the Question between Christianity and other Religions *fundamentally false*, as the *Mahometan*, and much more
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the *Pagan*, in its various Forms and Shapes. There is not only a *visible*, but a *great* Difference between the Lives of Christians, and of the Professors of those Religions, much to the Honour of Christendom, whatever some devout and well-meaning Christians, while they were only *declaiming*, and not speaking *critically* of Things, have *incautiously* said, or some of our Infidels have *slily* and *maliciously* pretended to the contrary. For not only the Bulk and Generality of Christians are much freer from all gross Vices and shameful Enormities, but vast Multitudes of them, even in these Days, degenerate as they are, have, by the Power and Efficacy of the Christian Doctrine (for what else should it be done by?) been raised to such a Perfection of Holiness, as, I am pretty sure, none of the other sort ever attained to, or, perhaps, have had any notion of. And this, I readily grant you, is a legitimate Presumption, if it be nothing more, that the *Gospel of Christ is the Word of God, and the Power of God unto Salvation*: And if your Faith in it has been hereby established and confirmed, as mine, I am free to profess to you, has greatly been, you need not, I think, be ashamed. But then, Sir, I can never admit, that the Merits of the different Sects and Denominations of Christians, all holding the Head, and agreeing in Fundamentals, can be rationally estimated this Way. The great Principles of natural Religion, and those of the Gospel Dispensation, are the Things whereby, in the main, our Lives are formed and fashioned; and these, we may reasonably expect, will operate in an *uniform* and *equal* Manner, and have an Effect *pretty nigh the same* in Christians of all sorts, who do sincerely and cordially embrace them; and the external Forms they disagree in, are not like to make any Difference that is considerable. Now, Sir, I will venture

venture to say, that where the great Principles of our holy Religion have been mixed and adulterated with many impure and pernicious Doctrines, as they have been in the Church of *Rome*, their Influence has not been weakened thereby in any such degree as will easily fall under common Notice and Observation. Whether the Members of that Church do not commonly *discern* the Genius and Tendency of their *peculiar* Doctrines; or whether, *discerning* it, they are not, by the superior and over-ruling Influence of the great Articles of Faith, which they embrace and profess in common with us, kept from pursuing it in their Practice; or whether they are not happy above *us* in some Circumstances, whereby the evil Tendency of their peculiar Doctrines may, in a good measure, be counter-balanced; whatever be the Reason, there is not, so far as appears to me, in *their* Lives and *ours*, or indeed those of any Sorts of Christians we are acquainted with, any such Difference as that an Argument can be rationally grounded upon it, in behalf of *one* against *another*. And where, in the Variety of Sects, there is a plain and discernible Difference, it will never be, I am fully persuaded, found greater, than may be accounted for, by surveying the *Circumstances* and *State of Things* they live respectively under, such as those I have been just now pointing out to you.

And now, I hope, it appears, that this Principle, *That is the best Religion, or Way of Religion, the Professors of which live best*, which is of such favourite Consideration with *you*, is absolutely false: And, though I am persuaded there is no need to say any thing more, yet one thing *I cannot refrain* from saying, to put you farther out of Conceit with it. Sir, it is a pitiful Piece of Popery. You will find it in *Bellarmino*, and other Popish Writers. It is
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the same thing, in other Words, with one of *his Notes* of the true Church. *Sanctity of Life*, according to *him*, is an *infallible Mark*, whereby the *true Church* is to be known. And he bears you in *Hand*, this Mark is only to be found upon his *own*. The Emissaries also of that Church never fail to employ it to make Profelytes among us. They are evermore magnifying the *Prayers* and *Devotions*, the *Watchings*, the *Fastings*, the *Mortifications*, the *Charities*, and the *Contempt of the World*, which so many Men and Women, in *their Church*, have been eminent for; and this is one of the surest Baits those *Fishers of Men* have to catch Protestants. And, therefore, I hope we shall at length be wiser than to use, and, by using, *authorise* and *give credit* to an Argument, which has been so *often*, and so *successfully* turned against ourselves.

I heartily wish, Sir, as I am confident *you* also do, that this Mark of Sanctity may be more visible than it is on *their*, and *all* the Churches of God; *that they may all be so guided and governed by his good Spirit, that all who profess, and call themselves Christians, may be led into the Way of Truth, and hold the Faith in the Unity of the Spirit, in the Bond of Peace, and in Righteousness of Life*. And as to yourself, Sir, I should esteem it, I do assure you, no inconsiderable Article in the Happiness of *my* Life, could I be a Means of leading you to act according to the whole Tenor of those good Words in the Prayers of our Church which we offer up daily in your Behalf; I mean, could I prevail with you *to hold the Faith, in the Unity of the Spirit, and the Bond of Peace, as you do in Righteousness of Life* already.

I am,

S I R,

Your Humble Servant.

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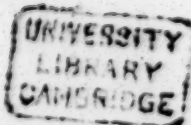
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Ex ore tuo ———
Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that
Thing which he alloweth. Rom. xiv. 22.

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